

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

Horizon

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

NOVELIST-PHILOSOPHERS: XV—MONTHERLANT

BY SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR

BRAVE NEW EUROPE:

I—‘THE TERROR OF ROME’ BY ALBERTO MORAVIA

II—THERE IS NOWHERE TO GO BY ROY BONGARTZ

LÉONID BY JAMES THRALL SOBY

WHERE SHALL JOHN GO? XIX—CEYLON BY RODERICK CAMERON

POEM BY W. H. AUDEN

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VOL. XX

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HORIZON

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

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FABER AND FABER LTD. PUBLISHERS

COMMENT

THE next issue of HORIZON will be a special number to commemorate the tenth year of our existence, after which the magazine will close down for a year and reopen, if conditions improve, in an invigorated form for Christmas 1950. There are various reasons for this course. Some are technical—for instance we have to quit our premises in Bedford Square at the end of this year and those who have enjoyed offices in Bedford Square require immense energy to seek them anywhere else. Others are economic, for example, the cost of printing HORIZON has risen steadily since the war while the circulation remains static. We have no way of recovering this expense since the public would not pay more than half-a-crown for HORIZON, nor can we afford a large campaign to make people buy it. For the last three years we have watched a slow fall in the English sales of HORIZON, fewer subscribers, more returns, increasing apathy. A traveller sent round the big towns of the North was only able to sell one subscription in a year; a university town like Cambridge has only imported a dozen copies a month since the magazine started. Only the continual increase of the demand for HORIZON in America has saved us from drastic action for some years. A decade of our lives is quite enough to devote to a lost cause such as the pursuit and marketing of quality in contemporary writing. In the end, despite all the good will in the world, the public gets the magazines it deserves. London, of course, is a particularly disheartening centre from which to operate, one seldom comes across the people who read HORIZON with pleasure, but is continually reminded of that sterile, embittered, traditional literary society which has killed so many finer things than a review of literature and art.

Another major problem is the discovery of material. It is fashionable to exclaim that HORIZON was much better in the war 'when it really stood for something', and that it has gone off since. In fact the opposite is true. The war numbers contained a great deal of uneven reporting which would not have been accepted now, but there was very little to do in the black-out but read, and people enjoyed it. It is this appetite which has gone off, not HORIZON. But with a higher standard of editing has gone a falling off of material. Many of our considerable literary talents have grown unwilling to write except for dollars, or have become psychologically impotent or grown so immersed in less uncertain forms of livelihood as to be unproductive. Broadcasts or lectures may be offered, original literary contributions seldom or never. The constant prodding of these elusive celebrities causes one in the end to dislike oneself. If we study the Index to HORIZON we can even see at what point various well-known writers ceased to appear and so obtain an insight into that decay of hope in the West which is the major psychological factor in the post-war world. In normal times the slow desiccation of middle-aged writers would be balanced by the emergence of younger ones, but in the world of cold war and conscription this has not proved to be the case. We have found many good, new, young

short-story writers in America but hardly any here, nor have the poets or essayists come forward. Some day these will emerge.

‘Nothing is certain, only the certain spring’, as Binyon wrote in these pages—but we may not be here to greet them.

This inability to discover new writers led us on to the next factor in our decision. The temporary staleness of the editor. To be an editor and yet write oneself is even more difficult than to be a publisher or a journalist and write oneself. An editor frays away his true personality in the banalities of good mixing, he washes his mind in other people’s bath-water, he sacrifices his inner voice to his engagement book. Those of us who wish to survive middle age must all walk the plank. In the country of the one-eyed, only the blind man has a chance to be king.

By suspending HORIZON for a year we give the Editor and his Assistant a chance to become themselves and to write. If they cannot avail themselves of this opportunity they will return to editing and accept their destiny. We also give the public a breather in which to view HORIZON’s ten-year effort in a truer perspective, so that if we reappear, better geared to contemporary events, with a closer focus on the passing scene, we may receive an unexpected welcome. A thousand more subscribers or two thousand more regular readers or a dozen brilliant and fertile young writers or a generous backing from some unexpected well-wisher—all these might have saved us but they could not, perhaps, have made a great difference to the fatigue of the mind, the disabusedness with the contemporary world, the increasing antipathy to creeds and governments, the disgust with the post-war set-up with which we oppose our ever-sleeping antagonist, the British reading public.

‘The second best’s a gay goodnight and quickly turn away.’ The swan-song of little magazines is always the same and we croak nothing now that was not said by Mr. Eliot in his farewell to the *Criterion* in 1939, and so we will now recommend to our readers an outstanding new poem of Auden and the excellent matter to be found in this and in our forthcoming Christmas number before retiring into the long-desired shade, to the satisfaction of the envious, the distress of our friends and the indifference of all but that one in every hundred and fifty thousand who constitute our world public.

W. H. AUDEN

MEMORIAL FOR THE CITY

'In the self-same point that our soul is made sensual, in the self-same point is the City of God ordained to him from without beginning.'

Juliana of Norwich.

I

The eyes of the crow and the eye of the camera open
On to Homer's world, not ours. First and last
They magnify earth, the abiding
Mother of gods and men; if they notice either
It is only in passing: gods behave, men die,
Both feel in their own small way, but She
Does nothing and does not care,
She alone is seriously there.

The crow on the crematorium chimney
And the camera roving the battle
Record a space where time has no place.
On the right a village is burning, in a market-town to the left
The soldiers fire, the mayor bursts into tears,
The captives are led away, while far in the distance
A tanker sinks into a dedolant sea.
That is the way things happen; for ever and ever
Plum-blossom falls on the dead, the roar of the waterfall covers
The cries of the whipped and the sighs of the lovers
And the hard bright light composes
A meaningless moment into an eternal fact
Which a whistling messenger disappears with into a defile:
One enjoys glory, one endures shame;
He may, she must. There is no one to blame.

The steady eyes of the crow and the camera's candid eye
See as honestly as they know how, but they lie.
The crime of life is not time. Even now, in this night
Among the ruins of the Postvergilian City
Where our past is a chaos of graves and the barbed wire stretches
 ahead
Into our future till it is lost to sight,

Our grief is not Greek: As we bury our dead
We know without knowing there is reason for what we bear,
That our hurt is not a desertion, that we are to pity
Neither ourselves nor our city;
Whoever the searchlights catch, whatever the loudspeakers blare,
We are not to despair.

II

Alone in a room Pope Gregory whispered his name
While the Emperor shone on a centreless world
From wherever he happened to be: the City rose
Upon their opposition, the yes and no
Of a rival allegiance; the sword, the local lord
Were not all; there was home and Rome;
Fear of the stranger was lost on the way to the shrine.

The facts and acts of the City bore a double meaning:
Limbs became hymns; embraces expressed in jest
A more permanent tie; infidel faces replaced
The family foe in the choleric's nightmare;
The children of water parodied in their postures
The infinite patience of heaven;
Those born under Saturn felt the gloom of the day of doom.

Scribes and innkeepers prospered; suspicious tribes combined
To rescue Jerusalem from a dull god,
And disciplined logicians fought to recover thought
From the eccentricities of the private brain
For the Sane City; framed in her windows, orchards, ports,
Wild beasts, deep rivers and dry rocks
Lay nursed on the smile of a merciful Madonna.

In a sandy province Luther denounced as obscene
The machine that so smoothly forgave and saved
If paid; he announced to the Sinful City a grinning gap
No rite could cross; he abased her before the Grace:
Henceforth division was also to be her condition;
Her conclusions were to include doubt,
Her loves to bear with fear; insecure, she endured.

Saints tamed, poets acclaimed the raging herod of the will;
The groundling wept as on a secular stage
The grand and the bad went to ruin in thundering verse;
Sundered by reason and treason the City
Found invisible ground for concord in measured sound,
While wood and stone learned the shameless
Games of man, to flatter, to show off, be pompous, to romp.

Nature was put to the question in the Prince's name;
She confessed, what he wished to hear, that she had no soul;
Between his scaffold and her coldness the restrained style,
The ironic smile became the ironic and devout,
Civility a city grown rich: in his own snob way
The unarmed gentleman did his job
As a judge to her children, as a father to her forests.

In a national capitol Mirabeau and his set
Attacked mystery; the packed galleries roared
And history marched to the drums of a clear idea,
The aim of the Rational City, quick to admire,
Quick to tire: she used up Napoleon and threw him away;
Her pallid affected heroes
Began their hectic quest for the prelapsarian man.

The deserts were dangerous, the waters rough, their clothes
Absurd but, changing their Beatrices often,
Sleeping little, they pushed on, raised the flag of the word
Upon lawless spots denied or forgotten
By the fear or the pride of the Glittering City;
Led by hated parental shades,
They invaded and harrowed the hell of her natural self.

Chimeras mauled them, they wasted away with the spleen,
Suicides picked them off; sunk off Cape Consumption,
Lost on the Tossplot Seas, wrecked on the Gibbering Isles
Or trapped in the ice of despair at the Soul's Pole,
They died, unfinished, alone; but now the forbidden,
The hidden, the wild outside were known:
Faithful without faith, they died for the Conscious City.

III

Across the square,
Between the burnt-out Law Courts and Police Headquarters,
Past the Cathedral far too damaged to repair,
Around the Grand Hotel patched up to hold reporters,
Near huts of some Emergency Committee,
The barbed wire runs through the abolished City.

Across the plains,
Between two hills, two villages, two trees, two friends,
The barbed wire runs which neither argues nor explains
But where it likes a place, a path, a railroad ends,
The humour, the cuisine, the rites, the taste,
The pattern of the City, are erased.

Across our sleep
The barbed wire also runs: It trips us so we fall
And white ships sail without us though the others weep,
It makes our sorry fig-leaf at the Sneerers Ball,
It ties the smiler to the double bed,
It keeps on growing from the witch's head.

Behind the wire
Which is behind the mirror, our image is the same
Awake or dreaming: it has no image to admire,
No age, no sex, no memory, no creed, no name,
It can be counted, multiplied, employed
In any place, at any time destroyed.

Is it our friend?
No, that is our hope; that we weep and it does not grieve,
That for it the wire and the ruins are not the end:
There is the flesh we are but never would believe,
The flesh we die but it is death to pity;
There is Adam, waiting for his City.

IV

LET HIS WEAKNESS SPEAK

Without me Adam would have fallen with Lucifer; he would never have been given the chance to cry *O felix culpa!*

It was I who suggested his theft to Prometheus; my indecision cost Adonis his life.

I heard Orpheus sing; I was not quite as moved as they say.

I was not taken in by the sheeps-eyes of Narcissus nor by whining Echo; I was angry with Psyche when she struck a light.

I was in Hector's confidence; so far as it went.

Had he listened to me, Oedipus would never have left Corinth; I cast no vote at the trial of Orestes.

I fell asleep when Diotima spoke of love; I was not responsible for the monsters which tempted St. Anthony.

To me the Saviour permitted His fifth word from the cross; to be a stumbling-block to the stoics.

I was the unwelcome third at the meetings of Tristan with Isolde; they tried to poison me.

I rode with Galahad on his quest for the San Grail; without understanding I kept his vow.

I was the just impediment to the marriage of Faustus and Helen; I know a ghost when I see one.

Hamlet I had no patience with; but I forgave Don Quixote all for his admission in the cart.

I was the missing item in Don Juan's list; for which he could never account.

I assisted Figaro the Barber in every intrigue; when Prince Tamino arrived at wisdom, I too obtained my reward.

I was innocent of the sin of the Ancient Mariner; time after time I warned Captain Ahab to accept happiness.

As for Metropolis, that once-great city; her delusions are not mine.

Her speeches impress me little, her statistics less; to all who dwell on the fashionable side of her mirrors, resentments and no peace.

At the place of my passion her photographers are gathered together; but I shall rise again to hear her judged.

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR

NOVELIST-PHILOSOPHERS

XV—MONTHERLANT¹

MONTHERLANT occupies a place in the long masculine tradition of those who suit the boastful Manicheism of Pythagoras to their own advantage. Like Nietzsche, he believes that only periods of historical impotence have exalted the eternal feminine, and that the hero should rise up against the doctrine of Magna Mater. As a specialist in heroism, he has undertaken to overthrow her. For him, woman is night, chaos, immanence. 'These convulsive depths are nothing more than woman in her pure state,' he wrote about Tolstoy's wife. According to him, it is the baseness and stupidity of contemporary man which have given women's deficiencies positive shape. We speak of women's instinct, their intuition and their powers of prophecy where we should denounce their lack of logic, their obstinate ignorance and their incapacity to appreciate reality; they have, in fact, neither powers of observation, nor of psychological penetration: able neither to face facts nor understand other people: their mystery is a trap, their fathomless treasures have the profundity of a void: unable to give anything to man, they can only drag him down. To Montherlant the great enemy is the mother. In a youthful play *Exile*, he wrote a scene where a mother was shown preventing her son from leading his own life: in *Olympique*, the youth who wanted to become an athlete is prevented by the frightened egotism of his mother; in *Les Celibataires* and *Les Jeunes Filles*, the mother is odious, her crime is to wish to keep her son for ever guarded in the darkness of her womb: she mutilates him to monopolize him and so fill up her own sterile emptiness; the worst of all possible teachers, she clips her child's wings, holds him back from the heights to which he aspires, makes him stupid and feeble. These accusations are not without foundation, but through the explicit reproaches which Montherlant addresses to woman as mother, it is clear that what he most hates in her is his own birth. He believes himself a god, he wants to be a god because he is a man, because he is a superior man, because, in fact, he is Montherlant. But a god is not conceived: his body, if he has one, is pure will poured into hard and

¹ An extract from Simone de Beauvoir's new book *Le Deuxième Sexe*.

obedient muscle, not flesh blindly inhabited by life and death, not this perishable, contingent, and so vulnerable flesh which he repudiates, and for which only his mother is responsible. 'The only place in the body of Achilles where he could be hurt, was where he had been held up by his mother.' Montherlant has never wanted to accept the human condition; what he calls his pride is, right from the start, a terrified flight from the risks which are inherent in a freedom which can only operate in the world through the medium of flesh: he claims to have affirmed freedom, but refuses its commitments: without ties, without roots, he dreams of a sovereign subjectivity withdrawn into itself: the memory of his carnal origin disquiets this dream and he has recourse to his usual procedure: instead of surmounting it, he denies it.

In the eyes of Montherlant the mistress is as baneful as the mother; she prevents man from resurrecting the God within him: the woman's role, he says, is an existence in the immediate, she lives on sensation, she wallows in immanence, she has a mania for happiness, and in all this she wants to imprison the man; with no sense of her own transcendence, she has no feeling for grandeur, she loves her man in his weakness and not in his strength, in his sorrows and not in his joys: she wants him disarmed, unhappy to the point of wishing to convince him of his misery in spite of all the evidence to the contrary. He is greater than she and so eludes her; to possess him she wants to reduce him to her own stature. For she has need of him, being not self-sufficient, but a parasite. Through the eyes of Dominique, Montherlant shows us women walking in a park, 'spineless creatures, hung on their lover's arms like huge, disguised slugs'. With the exception of those who play games, women are for him incomplete creatures, destined to slavery: soft and spineless, they have no grip on the world and so they struggle bitterly to annex a lover or, better still, a husband. As far as I know, Montherlant does not employ the symbol of the praying mantis directly, but he applies its meaning: for the woman to love is to devour: she claims to give herself and takes. He quotes Madame Tolstoy's cry: 'I lived through him, for him and I demand the same for myself', and he denounces the dangers of such a rage of abandonment: he finds a terrible truth in the words of Ecclesiastes: 'A man who wishes you harm is better than a woman who wishes you well'. He recalls the experience of

Lyautey: 'When one of my men marries, he becomes half a man'. Above all, it is for the man who is above the ordinary that marriage is most pernicious, a ridiculous bourgeois concession: imagine saying 'Mrs. Aeschylus' or 'I am dining with the Dantes'. Such things can only diminish the prestige of a great man and, more important, marriage breaks down the splendid solitude of the hero who 'must not be distracted from himself'. I have already said that Montherlant has chosen a freedom without an aim, that is to say that he prefers the illusion of autonomy to the freedom which involves itself in the world: it is this unattachedness which he wishes to defend against women who are heavy and weigh men down, 'It is a hard fact that a man cannot walk straight when he is arm in arm with the woman he loves'. 'I was on fire, she extinguished me, I was walking on the waters, she took my arm and I went under.' How can she have so much power since she is nothing but a lack, emptiness, poverty, negation and an illusionary magic? Montherlant does not explain this, he only superbly says, 'The lion is right to be afraid of the mosquito', but the reply is obvious: it is easy to think oneself sovereign when alone, strong when careful to avoid lifting any weight. Montherlant has chosen the easy path, he claims to like difficult values, but he wants to obtain them easily, 'The crowns which we give ourselves are the only ones worth having,' says the King in *Pasiphae*. A convenient principle. Montherlant crowns himself and dons the purple, but it only needs an outside eye to see that his diadem is cardboard and, like the King in Hans Andersen, he has nothing on. It is so much less tiring to walk on the waters in a dream than to tread the earth in reality, and that is why the lion which is Montherlant fears the mosquito which is women: he fears the test of reality.

If Montherlant had really exploded the myth of the eternal feminine, he should be congratulated: it is by denying the idea of 'woman' that one can help women to be human beings, but, as we have seen, he has not smashed the idol, he has simply turned it into a monster. He also believes in that obscure and irreducible essence—femininity: with Aristotle and St. Thomas he thinks that woman can be defined negatively: woman is woman through a lack of virility, and that is the destiny to which every individual female must submit without question. She who thinks to escape it is at the lowest scale of human existence; without succeeding in

becoming a man she renounces the status of woman; she is nothing but a ridiculous caricature, a mask: the fact that she has a body and a conscience fail to give her any reality. A Platonist in his moments, Montherlant seems to think that the Ideas of femininity and virility are stronger than the individual and the person who shares in neither one nor the other has only the appearance of being alive. He condemns without recourse those 'screech-owls' who have the audacity to claim to be autonomous beings, capable of thought and action. And in delineating Andrée Hacquebaut's portrait he wants to show that any woman who tries to make a person of herself can only be transformed into a grimacing puppet. Naturally Andrée is ugly, poor, badly dressed, and even dirty—her nails and fore-arms not quite clean: the little amount of culture which she lays claim to has been enough to kill all her femininity: Costals assures us that she is intelligent, but on every page he devotes to her, Montherlant convinces us of her stupidity; Costals claims to find her sympathetic, Montherlant makes us hate her. By this skilful equivocation the myth of feminine intelligence is exposed and it is established that an original fall from grace has perverted in woman all the virile qualities to which she might aspire.

Montherlant is willing to make an exception for those women who go in for sport: by the independent use of their bodies these can conquer for themselves a spirit and a soul; but once again it is also easy to pull them down from these summits. With great delicacy Montherlant avoids the winner of the thousand-metres to whom he has consecrated an enthusiastic hymn of praise—he has no doubt that he can easily seduce her and wants to spare her such a downfall. Dominique was unable to maintain herself on the heights to which Alban called her: she fell in love with him: 'She who had been all spirit and all soul, sweated, panted, grunted'. Indignant, Alban drives her away. One can admire a woman who through the discipline of sport has subdued her flesh, but an independant existence wrapped round by a woman's body is an outrageous scandal: as soon as a mind inhabits it, the body of a woman becomes odious. The true role of women is to be purely flesh. Montherlant approves of the Oriental attitude: as an object of pleasure the weak sex has a place in the sun, humble, doubtless, but authentic. Its justification is in the pleasure which the male derives from it, and in this pleasure alone. The ideal woman is completely stupid and completely submissive, always ready to receive the man

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and asking nothing of him. Such a one is Douce, whom Alban comes finally to appreciate: 'Douce, so wonderfully stupid and always the more desirable the stupider she is . . . useless, except for making love, apart from which he avoided her with a gentle firmness'. Such is the little Arab Radidja who submissively accepts pleasure and money, and such a one we can imagine that 'feminine animal' whom he meets on a Spanish train: 'She had an air of such bovine meekness that I felt desire for her'. The author explains: 'What is maddening in women is their pretension to reason. If only they would exaggerate their animality they would come near to being superhuman.'

Nevertheless, Montherlant is in no way an Oriental sultan: to begin with he lacks sensuality. He is far from enjoying himself wholeheartedly with the 'feminine animals': they are 'ill, unhealthy, never quite clean'. Costals sometimes feels disgust in Solange's presence, confronted with 'this sweet, almost sickly odour, this body without muscle or nerve, like a white loach'. He dreams of an embrace more worthy of him, between equals, where the pleasure would come from strength defeated. The Oriental, on the other hand, takes a voluptuous delight in women, and so establishes a reciprocity which is seen in the *Song of Songs*, *The Thousand and One Nights* and so many Arab poems sung to the glory of the beloved: of course there are dreary women, but there are also delicious ones and a sensual man can trustfully abandon himself to them without humiliation. Montherlant's hero on the other hand is always on the defensive: 'To take without being taken is the only acceptable rule between a man who is outstanding and woman'. He is willing enough to speak of the instant when desire is born which seems to him a virile, an aggressive moment, he avoids the moment of pleasure; perhaps he is frightened of finding that he also sweats, pants and gives up his essences. But no: for who would dare to breathe in that odour, feel his moisture? His disarmed flesh exists for no one, because there is no one opposite him; his is the only consciousness, his the only true and sovereign presence; and if pleasure exists for him he takes no account of it; that would be allowing someone to have the advantage of him. He talks complacently of the pleasure he gives, never of that he receives; for to receive is to admit a dependence. 'What I ask of a woman is to give her pleasure': the living warmth of shared bliss would be complicity; and he admits

none, he prefers the lonely heights of domination. What he looks for in women are cerebral not sensual satisfactions.

And, above all, those of a pride which longs to express itself without incurring any risk. With a woman 'one has the same feeling as with a horse, with the bull that one is going to fight: the same uncertainty and the same wish to *test one's strength*'. To test it against other men would be rather dangerous; they would intervene, impose unforeseen standards and give an unexpected verdict. But with a bull or a horse one remains one's own judge which is a great deal more reassuring. And with a woman—if we choose her carefully—we can also be alone with her: 'I do not love with any sense of equality because in women it is the child I seek'. This explains nothing: why does he look for the child, not for the equal? Montherlant would be more truthful if he were to say that he, Montherlant, was without equals and more exactly did not wish to have any. Anyone who resembles him makes him afraid. When he wrote *Olympique* what he admired in sport was the strictness of the competitions which create hierarchies with which it is impossible to juggle: but he himself has failed to learn this lesson; in the rest of his work and his life, his heroes, as he himself, withdraw from all comparison; they have dealings with animals, with landscapes, with children, with child-women, but never with equals. Although once in love with the harsh daylight of sport Montherlant only accepts as mistresses the women from whom his timid pride has nothing to fear; he chooses them 'passive and vegetable', childish, stupid, venal. He will systematically avoid attributing any power of thought to them, should he discover the slightest trace of any, he sheers off and goes away; there is no question of establishing any reciprocal relationship with them; in the kingdom of men woman should be nothing but a simple animated object; never can she be looked upon as autonomous; never can her own point of view be taken into account. Montherlant's hero has a moral standpoint which he thinks arrogant, but which is really only comfortable. He bothers about nothing except his relationship with himself; being so absolutely inferior, the existence of the woman reveals the substantial, the essential and the indestructible superiority of the man—without risk.

In this way Douce's silliness allows Alban 'to reconstruct in some measure the sensations of a Greek demigod in his nuptials to

a fabled goose'. And now we have Costals transformed into a superb lion from the very moment that he touches Solange. 'Hardly were they seated beside each other than he placed his hand on the young girl's thigh (beneath her dress), and then held her by the centre of her body as a lion keeps its paw outstretched on the chunk of meat which he has just won for himself.' This feat, which so many men modestly accomplish each day in the darkness of the cinema is announced by Costals to be 'the primitive gesture of the overlord'. If, like him, they were aware of their grandeur, lovers and husbands who kiss their mistress before possessing her would have an inexpensive acquaintance with these powerful metamorphoses. 'He vaguely savoured the face of this woman, like a lion, who from time to time stops tearing the meat in his paws to lick it.' This carnivorous joy is not the only pleasure which the male can derive from his female; she is the excuse for him to examine and enjoy to the full all the experiences of his own heart. One night, Costals amused himself even to the point of letting himself suffer, until satiated with the taste of his grief, he lightly attacks a wing of chicken. We cannot often allow ourselves such a caprice. But there are other joys, either strong or subtle. Condescension for example: Costals condescends to reply to letters from women, and sometimes even to take a certain trouble over them: to an inspired little peasant he writes at the end of a pedantic dissertation: 'I doubt if you can understand me, but that is better than if I *descended* to your level'. Sometimes it amuses him to model a woman in his own image: 'I want you to be a shadow for me . . . I haven't brought you up to my level for you to be anything else but myself'. He thinks it would be amusing to be nice enough to provide Solange with a few happy memories. But, above all, it is when he sleeps with a woman that he feels drunk with his prodigality: dispenser of happiness, dispenser of peace, of warmth, of strength, of pleasure, he is overwhelmed by the richness he gives out. He owes nothing to his mistresses; sometimes, to make this quite certain, he pays them; but even when no fee is asked for loving the woman is beholden to him without reciprocity. She gives nothing but he takes. So he finds it completely normal the day when he takes Solange's virginity to pack her off to the *toilette*. Even if a woman is most tenderly loved it would be a bad moment when her man puts himself out for her. He is male by divine right and by right divine she is consecrated to

the *bidet* and the glass of beer. The pride of Costals here gives such an imitation of clumsiness that it is difficult to see what makes him different from any *maladroit* commercial traveller.

Her first duty is to submit to the demands of his generosity. When he thinks that Solange is unappreciative of his attentions, Costals flies into a blind rage. If he cherishes Radidja it is because her face lights up with joy as soon as he makes love to her. Thus he has the pleasure of feeling himself to be at once a beast of prey and a *grand seigneur*. We could, however, ask with a certain wonder where all this intoxication of possession and conquest comes from if the woman is only a poor thing, a piece of painted flesh with an ersatz conscience. How can Costals take such trouble with these miserable creatures? Such contradictions are the measure of a pride which is but vanity. An even more subtle form of delight for the strong, for the generous, for the masters, is in pity for the unhappy race. From time to time Costals is moved by feeling in himself such brotherly solemnity, such sympathy for the humble, so much pity for women.

What could be more touching than the unexpected gentleness of the strong? He renews in himself the noble figure of Epinal when he bends over these sick animals which are women. He likes to see even an athlete defeated, wounded and troubled. As for the others the more pathetic they are the better. Their periodic misery disgusts him and yet Costals confides in us that he had always preferred women on the days on which he knew them to be indisposed. It even happens that he gives way to his pity. He goes so far as to make promises, if not to keep them. He promises to help Andrée and to marry Solange. When pity ebbs out of his soul these promises die, for, after all, has not he the right to contradict himself? It is he who makes the rules of the game which he plays with himself as the sole partner.

Inferior, pitiable, this is not enough. Montherlant wants women to be despicable. Sometimes he claims that the conflict between desire and disdain is a tragedy: 'Ah, to desire what one despises, what a tragedy! To have to attract and repel almost in the same gesture, to inflame and extinguish quickly as one does with a match is the pathos of our relationship with women!' In fact there is no tragedy, except from the match's point of view, which hardly matters to him. As for the striker, careful not to burn his fingers, it is only too clear that he adores the game. If his pleasure did not

lie just in desiring that which he despised, he would not systematically refuse to desire whatever he respects. Alban would not thrust Dominique aside; he would choose to love her as an equal and he could avoid despising so much the objects of his desire. After all, it is not easy to see *a priori* in what a little Spanish dancer, young, pretty, ardent and unaffected is so despicable. Is it because she is poor, of no family and of no culture? We might fear that in Montherlant's eyes these are in fact blemishes, but above all he despises her as a woman, by decree. He rightly says that it is not the mysterious feminine which arouses masculine dreams, but these dreams which create the mystery. But he also projects into the object what his own subjectivity requires. It is not because they are despicable that he despises women; it is because he wants to despise them that they seem abject to him. He sees himself on some peak which is the higher the greater the distance is between him and them; this is why he chooses such pathetic *affaires* for his heroes. Against Costals the great writer he sets up a provincial old maid, tormented by sex and boredom, and a foolish, grasping, *petite-bourgeoise* of the extreme right: this is indeed judging a superior individual by very humble standards. The result of this clumsy prudence is that he appears to us rather small. However, this does not matter, for Costals thinks himself great. The smallest weaknesses of a woman are enough to nourish his belief. A passage from *Les Jeunes Filles* is particularly significant. Before going to bed with Costals, Solange prepares herself for the night: 'She had to go to the *toilette*, and Costals remembered a filly he had once had, so proud and so delicate that she never urinated nor staled when he was on her back'. Here we have the hatred of the flesh (one thinks of Swift's *Celia*). The desire to equate the woman with a domestic animal, the refusal to recognize in her any autonomy, even that of going to the lavatory, but above all, while Costals becomes indignant, he forgets that he himself has a bladder and a colon in the same way as when disgusted by a woman covered in sweat he abolishes his own personal secretions. He is pure spirit served by a body of steel. 'Disdain is more noble than desire', Montherlant says in *Aux Fontaines du Désir*; and Alvaro says 'My daily bread is disgust'. What kind of an alibi is contempt when it takes pleasure in itself? From the moment that we observe and we judge, we feel radically different from the person on whom we pass sentence and we escape without tarnish

the blemishes of which he is accused. With what delight Montherlant, throughout his whole life, has paraded his contempt for others. It is enough for him to denounce their stupidity to believe himself clever, their cowardice to see himself as courageous. At the beginning of the Occupation he gave way to an orgy of contempt for his defeated countrymen: he was neither French nor defeated, he rose above it all. And yet it appears that after all he, this condemnatory Montherlant, had done no more than anyone else to forestall defeat; he did not even join the army, but he immediately began to accuse others with uncontrollable passion. If he pretends to be upset by his own feelings of disgust, it is to make them seem the more sincere and so the more enjoyable. The truth is that he finds such comfort in denunciation that he systematically tries to make the woman more abject. It amuses him to tempt poor girls with money or jewels and he is overjoyed when they accept his dubious gifts. He plays a sadistic role with Andrée for the joy not of seeing her suffering but of seeing her humiliate herself. He suggests to Solange that she should kill her child: she accepts the idea and Costals is overjoyed: in a paroxysm of contempt he sleeps with this potential murderess.

The fable of the caterpillars gives us the key to his attitude: whatever its hidden meaning, it is in itself very significant. One day he decided to make water on some caterpillars, amusing himself by sparing some and exterminating others; he accords a laughing pity to those which try to live, and generously lets them take their chance; this game enchants him. Without the caterpillars his jet of water was a mere excretion; with them it becomes the instrument of life and death; confronted by the squirming insects, the man who empties his bladder knows the despotic solitude of a God without danger of reprisal. And so with the feminine animals, from the height of his pedestal, the man, now tender, now cruel, in turn just and capricious, gives, takes back, overwhelms, pities and grows angry. He obeys nothing but his own good pleasure; he is master, free and unique. But it is necessary to him that these animals should be nothing but animals; they will be carefully chosen, their weaknesses will be flattered, they will be treated as animals with such eagerness that they will finish by accepting it as their condition. In the same way the whites of Louisiana and Georgia are delighted by the petty thieving and deceptions of the negroes. They feel confirmed in the superiority

which the colour of their skin has conferred on them, and if one of these negroes takes it into his head to be honest, he will be even the more ill-treated. Thus, in concentration camps the debasement of the human being is systematically practised: the Master Race found in the wretchedness of their victims the proof of its superhuman essence.

There is no coincidence in all this; we all know that Montherlant admired the Nazi ideology. It delights him, at a festival of the Sun, to see the triumph of the crooked cross, which is the symbol of the wheel of the sun. 'The victory of the wheel of the sun is not only a victory of the Sun, the triumph of Paganism, it is a victory of the solar principle which is that everything is turning. On that occasion I saw the triumph of the principle which imbues me, which I have praised, which I know with my full consciousness governs my life.' We also know with how pertinent a sense of grandeur he set up before the French the example of those Germans 'who inhale the splendour of force'. The same frightened love of that which is easy and which makes him fly from his equals forces him to kneel to the victorious. He hopes by this genuflection to be identified with them and so here we have him Conqueror—what he had always most wanted to be—that which he is for a bull, for a caterpillar or for a woman, the conqueror now of life and liberty itself. It is true to say that even before the military victory he praised the 'totalitarian magicians'. Like them, he had always been nihilist and hated humanity. 'People are not even worth being led, and it is not necessary for humanity to have done something to you to make you hate it.' Like them he believed that certain people, a race, a nation, or he himself, Montherlant, inherited an absolute privilege which gives them every prerogative over others. His whole outlook justifies and calls for war and persecution. To understand his attitude towards women we must examine his ethic more closely because in the end we must know in the name of what they are condemned.

The Nazi mythology had a basic historical infra-structure. Nihilism expressed German despair; the cult of the hero served a positive end for which millions of soldiers have died. Montherlant's attitude has no positive counterpart and expresses nothing but his own choice. In fact this hero has chosen fear.

In every being there is a desire for sovereignty, but this cannot be affirmed unless it is risked. No superiority is ever innate since,

reduced to his own subjectivity, man is nothing. It is by their acts and by their works that these hierarchies of men are established. Merit has to be perpetually reconquered. Montherlant knows this himself: 'One has no rights except to those things one is prepared to risk'. But he has never wanted to risk himself among his equals and it is because he can't face up to it that he must abolish humanity. 'What a maddening obstacle are other people,' says the king in *La Reine Morte*. Because they are the lie to the complacent myth which vanity creates around oneself; they have to be denied. It is remarkable that not one of Montherlant's works depicts a conflict between men. The great drama of living is in co-existence and he avoids it. His hero is always alone confronted with animals, children, women, landscapes; he is the prey of his own desires (as the Queen in *Pasiphaë*) or to his own needs (like *Le Maître de Santiago*) but there is never another person at his side. Even Alban in *Le Songe* has no friend. He despises Prinnet when alive and only exalts him when he is a corpse. Like his life, Montherlant's work allows for only one mind.

And with this all, feeling is drained out of this universe: there can be no reciprocal relations in it since there is only one person. Love is contemptible but it is not contemptible in the name of friendship because 'Friendship has no guts'. And all human solidarity is rejected with arrogance. The hero was not conceived, he is not limited by time and space, 'I can see no good reason for interesting myself any more in those exterior things which are contemporary to me than in those of any period in the past'. Nothing which happens to anybody else counts for him, 'To tell the truth, events have never mattered to me. I have never liked them, except in the illumination they made in me by touching me. Let them then be anything they want.' Action is impossible: 'To have had ardour, energy and audacity and not having been able to put them to the service of anyone, through lack of faith in anything that is human.' This is to say that all transcendence is forbidden. Montherlant recognizes this: love and friendship are fripperies, disdain inhibits action, he does not believe in art and he does not believe in God. Nothing remains but the immanence of pleasure: 'My only ambition is to have used my senses better than others have,' he wrote in 1925, and again: 'After all, what do I want—to possess those people who please me in peace and with poetry'. And in 1941: 'But I who accuse, what have I done with

these twenty years; they have been a dream filled with my pleasure. I have lived by and large making myself drunk with what I loved, face to face with life.' Well and good. But isn't it just precisely because she wallows in immanence that the woman is despised? What higher aims, nobler ends does Montherlant put up against the possessive love of the mother, the wife or the mistress? He also looks for 'possession' and as to being 'face to face with life', many women could beat him at that. It is true that he has a particular taste for unusual pleasures, those which can be obtained from animals, young boys and adolescent girls. He is indignant when a passionate mistress objects to putting her twelve-year-old daughter in his bed: it was not very broad-minded. Does he not know that the sensuality of women is no less tormented than that of men? If it was by this criterion that we judged the superiority of the sexes women would probably win. The truth is that Montherlant's incoherences on this point are quite monstrous. In the name of the principle of 'alternation' he declares that by the very fact that nothing is worth anything, everything is of equal value. He accepts everything, he wants to embrace everything and he is delighted that his broadmindedness is a matter of alarm to respectable mothers. Nevertheless it was he who during the Occupation called for an 'inquisition' which would censor films and newspapers. The thighs of American girls make him feel ill, but the shining member of a bull exalts him. *Chacun à son goût*. Everyone re-creates in his own way the 'magical'. In the name of what values does this great orgiast spit on the orgies of others—because they are not his own? But then does all morality consist in being Montherlant?

Obviously he would reply that taking possession isn't everything; the way in which it is done is also important. Pleasure must be the other side of renunciation; that the voluptuous man also has in him the stuff of a hero or of a saint. But a great many women are expert at reconciling their pleasures with the splendid image that they have of themselves. Why must we believe that Montherlant's narcissistic dreams are more valuable?

Because, in fact, we are dealing with dreams. By refusing to give an objective meaning to the words which he handles so adeptly—greatness, sanctity, heroism—Montherlant turns them into hiccups. He was frightened to test his superiority among men and to get drunk on the wine of exaltation he retreated to

the clouds: the unique is always superior. He shuts himself up in a roomful of mirrors: to infinity they will reflect his image and he thinks that he alone is enough to populate the earth; but he is only a recluse, his own prisoner. He thinks himself free but he makes over his liberty to the benefit of his ego: he models the statue of Montherlant according to the borrowed platitudes of the Epinal transfer factory. Alban rejecting Dominique because he saw himself in the mirror she put up to him as a silly child is an illustration of this slavery: one is only a silly child if others think us to be so. Proud Alban submits his heart to this collective conscience which he despises. Montherlant's liberty is an attitude, not a reality and since without an aim action is impossible for him, he consoles himself with gestures: he is a mimer. Women for him are convenient accomplices: they give him the right replies, he monopolizes the limelight, he crowns himself with laurels and drapes himself in purple: but all this is enacted on his private stage; thrust into a public place in real light under a real sky the actor is blinded, can no longer stand upright, reels and falls. In a burst of lucidity Costals cries out: 'In the end what a joke are these victories over women!' Yes indeed. The values, the exploits which Montherlant would have us admire are a sad joke, the great deeds which intoxicate him are also only gestures, never undertakings. He is moved by the suicide of Peregrinus, by Pasiphæ's audacity, by the elegance of the Japanese who sheltered his adversary under his umbrella before killing him in a duel. But he declares that: 'Who one's adversary is and the ideas he represents are not therefore so very important'. In 1941 this declaration had a peculiar resonance. He also says that every war is beautiful, no matter how it ends, that force is always admirable, no matter what it serves. 'To fight without faith is the formula to which we are finally driven if we wish to maintain the one idea of man which is acceptable, that in which he is hero and sage at the same time.' But it is curious to see that Montherlant's noble indifference to all causes inclined him not towards the Resistance but towards National Socialism, that his limitless freedom chose submission and he looked for the secret of the warrior thinker, not in the Maquis but among the conquerors. Nor is this an accident; the pseudo-sublime of *La Reine Morte* and *Le Maître de Santiago* end in these mystifications. In these two plays which are the more significant because of their high claims we see two imperious males who sacrifice to

their sterile pride two women whose only fault is that of being human: they long for love and earthly happiness: as punishment one loses her life, the other her soul. We can ask again. In whose name? The author would reply with dignity—nobody's. He did not want the King to have too good a reason for killing Ines; that would turn this assassination into a banal political crime. 'Why do I kill her? Probably there is a reason, but I cannot make it out,' he says. The reason is that it is necessary that the Sun principle should triumph over earthly ordinariness. But as we have seen, this principle illuminates no purpose, it demands destruction and nothing else. As for Alvaro, Montherlant tells us in a Preface that he is interested in certain men of that period because of their 'decisive faith, their contempt for external reality, their love of ruin, their fury for nothingness'. It is to this fury that the Maître de Santiago sacrifices his daughter. It has been dressed up in the fine cloak of mysticism; how dull it is to prefer happiness to the mystical! In fact, sacrifices and renunciation have no sense except in the light of an end, a human end; and the ends which are stronger than a particular love and a personal happiness can only become clear in a world which recognizes the value of love and happiness. Shopgirl's morality is more authentic than the myths of nothingness because it has its roots in life and in reality and it is from this basis that higher aspirations can spring. We can easily see Ines de Castro in Buchenwald and the King rushing off to the German Embassy for affairs of State. During the Occupation a number of shopgirls earned a respect which we cannot give to Montherlant. The hollow words with which he stuffs himself are dangerous because of their very emptiness; the mystique of the superman authorizes every momentary devastation. The fact is that in the plays which we are discussing this mystique affirms itself by two murders: one physical and one moral. Alvaro hasn't far to go to become savage, solitary, underestimated, a Grand Inquisitor, nor the King—misunderstood and rejected—a Himmler. We can kill women, we can kill Jews, we can kill effeminate men and Christians who accept Jewish ideas, one can kill anything one pleases in the name of these lofty ideals. A negative mystique cannot be affirmed by negations. The real excellence is in a positive step towards the future, the future of humanity. The false hero, in order to persuade himself that he has gone far, that he is superior, always looks backwards and at his feet; he despises, he

accuses, he oppresses, he persecutes, he tortures, he massacres. It is through the evil he can do to his neighbour that he considers himself his superior. These are the summits which Montherlant points out to us with a grand gesture when he breaks off from being 'face to face with life'.

'Like the donkeys of the Arab wells, I turn, I turn, blind and eternally covering the same ground. Only, I do not make fresh water spring up.' There is little to add to this confession which Montherlant signed in 1927. Fresh water has never sprung up. Perhaps Montherlant should have set alight the funeral pyre of Peregrinus: it would have been his most logical solution, but he preferred to take refuge in the cult of himself. Instead of giving himself to this world which he did not know how to make fertile, he was content to admire himself in it and he has ordered his life for the sole advantage of this vision which he alone can contemplate. 'A Prince knows how to behave in all circumstances, even in defeat,' he says: and because he is comfortable in his defeat he believes himself a Prince. From Nietzsche he has learnt that 'the woman is the diversion of the hero' and he thinks it enough to be diverted by women to be consecrated a hero. The rest is to be seen. As Costals says: 'In the end, what a joke!'

[Translated by SONIA BROWNELL]

BRAVE NEW EUROPE

I—'THE TERROR OF ROME'

ALBERTO MORAVIA

I WAS so keen on having a pair of new shoes that that winter I often dreamed of them in the hang-out where the porter at the stables leased me a hammock for a hundred lire a night. I didn't go barefoot, of course. But the shoes I had were the ones I got from the Americans. They were low, light shoes and by now there were hardly any heels left and one of them had a hole in the little toe and the other was like a slipper and kept coming off my foot. By selling odd things on the black market, carrying parcels, and running messages I managed to get just enough to eat; but I never succeeded in laying aside the several thousand lire needed for the shoes. And I had become obsessed with those shoes, it was like a

black cloud hanging in the air and following wherever I went. I thought I simply couldn't go on living without those new shoes and once or twice the discomfort of being shoeless made me even think of killing myself. When I went through the streets I did nothing but look at the shoes on passers-by; or else I stopped at the shoe shop windows and stared like a baby at the shoes, comparing prices, shapes, and colours and choosing in my mind the pair that would suit me best.

In the hang-out where I slept I got to know a fellow called Lorusso, an evacuee like me: a blond curly-haired lad, stocky and shorter than me. And I realized I was jealous of him because in some way or another he had managed to lay his hands on a really fine pair of boots: high ankles and laced up, with thick leather and double soles—the kind allied officers wore. Those shoes were too big for Lorusso so each morning he used to stuff them with newspaper to prevent them coming off his feet. But as for me, being taller than him, they fitted me like a glove. I knew, too, that Lorusso had a want in his turn. He wanted to buy a shepherd's pipe. He knew how to play the pipe because before he came to Rome he had been with shepherds up in the mountains. He said that if he had one, being small and blond and with his blue eyes and wind-jacket and allied trousers stuck into allied boots, and with his pipe at his lips, he'd be able to go a round of the restaurants playing shepherds' airs on his pipe and then some other tunes he learnt when he was running errands for the Americans. But the pipe cost a lot, as much as the shoes or more, and Lorusso, who was a jack of all trades like me, never had the ready cash for buying it. He used to think a lot about the pipe as I did about the shoes. So without a word being said we reached an agreement. First I talked to him about the shoes, then he talked to me about the pipe. But that was all, only words, for we never succeeded in getting hold of either shoes or pipe.

Finally we got together and made a decision. Really it was I who thought of it but Lorusso fell in with it immediately as though he'd never thought of anything else in all his born days. We would go to some solitary place where lovers congregate, such as Villa Borghese, and do a job on one of those couples who keep away from the beaten track the better to do their endless rubbing and kissing. It was then that I discovered Lorusso was bloody-minded, a thing I would never have thought in view of his

innocent shepherd-boy appearance. Immediately he began talking with enthusiasm and saying that he felt up to 'doing in' both girl and man. He kept repeating this phrase 'do in'—heaven knows where he had picked it up—with great gusto as though already foreseeing the moment for doing them in really and truly. At one stage, even, so as to show me what he'd do, he hurled himself at me and gripped me by the neck and pretended to give me endless blows on the head with a massive iron spanner he had. 'That's what I'd give them . . . and that . . . and then that . . . until I'd done them both in.'

Now I'm very jumpy because I spent a day and night in a cellar under the ruins of my house when the village was being bombarded, and ever since my whole face keeps twitching with a tic and a mere nothing is enough to put me beside myself. So with a shove I sent Lorusso cracking against the wall of the hang-out and said: 'Keep your hands where they belong. You touch me again and I swear I'll take this spanner and do you in well and properly.' Then I pulled myself together and added: 'See what an ignoramus you are. You're a real ox, you can't understand anything . . . Don't you realize that couples don't make love above board but secretly? Otherwise they'd do it at home . . . So if you take their money they can't report you because they're afraid of a mother or husband who'd get to know they were making love. But if you do them in it's in the papers, everyone gets to know it and in the end the police track you down . . . Instead we've got to pretend to be two plain clothes men: hands up, you're kissing, don't you know it's against the law? You've committed an offence . . . and with the excuse of the law we take their cash and off we go.'

Lorusso is really stupid and he looked at me with open mouth, his eyes round and blue like porcelain under his hair that grows to the middle of his forehead. In the end he said: 'Yes, but . . . dead men tell no tales'. This he said without expression and by-the-way as when he had said 'do them in'. Who knows when he had picked up the catch phrase. I answered: 'Don't pretend you don't know . . . Do what I say and keep your mouth shut.' This time he didn't protest any more, so we stayed in agreement about the job.

Towards evening on the day we'd fixed we went off to Villa Borghese. Lorusso had put the spanner in his wind-jacket and in

my pocket I had a German pistol I had been given to sell—but so far I hadn't found a buyer. As a precaution I unloaded it thinking that either the job would come off immediately, or if it became a case for shooting it was much better to give up. We went along the pathway by the riding-ground, and there each bench had its couple, but there were lamps and plenty of passers-by as in ordinary streets. So we moved from that pathway to the one that leads to the Pincio; it is one of the darkest places in Villa Borghese and also more favoured by couples because it is near the Piazza del Popolo. On the Pincio, owing to the trees and the fewness of the lights, it was really dark, and there was no counting the couples on the benches. There were even two couples per bench, and each one making itself at home, kissing and caressing without any shame at being seen by the other that was doing the same. Lorusso had now lost his urge to do people in, because that's how he was made—quick to change ideas. And when he saw all those kissing couples he began to sigh with eyes shining and his face full of envy, and then he said: 'I'm a young man, too, and when I see all those lovers kissing one another I tell you honestly if I weren't in Rome but in the country I'd give the man a fright, so that he'd skip off and as for the girl I'd say to her "Up beautiful, come on beautiful, I'm not doing you any harm, come on lovely with your little Tommasino."'

He was walking in the middle of the pathway, away from me, and it was a disgrace the way he turned and looked at the couples, licking his lips with his thick red tongue, just like an ox. And he tried to get me to look at the couples too, and see how the men put their hands under the girls' clothes and the girls clung to the men and let the hands be put. I answered: 'What a bumpkin you are. Do you want your pipe, yes or no?' And he answered while he was turning to look at one of those benches: 'What I would really like now is a girl . . . no matter which . . . for instance, that one'. 'Well then,' I said, 'you had no business taking the spanner and coming along with me.' 'I'm on the verge of thinking I might have done better.' He said that because he was light-headed and changed his mind at every moment. As we wandered through the Pincio he had seen a bit of a girl's nude leg, a kiss or two and a few squeezes, and that was enough to give him the feeling of dying to make love. But for my part I'm not easily distracted and when I want something I have to have it, nothing else will do. And as

I've already said I wanted the shoes and I'd made up my mind to get them that evening, come what might.

For a while we wandered through the Pincio along the pathways from bench to bench, passing by all those white statues arranged in rows in the shadow of the trees. We never came on a suitable place because we were always afraid that the other couples who were so near would see us. And Lorusso, as usual, began to get distracted. This time it wasn't love he was thinking of but, heaven knows why, those marble busts.

'Who are all these statues,' he asked suddenly. 'Is there any way of knowing who they are?' 'Look what an ignoramus you are,' I answered. 'They're all great men. As they're great men they've made statues of them and put them here.' He drew near one of the statues and said: 'But this one's a woman'. 'Then she must have been great too,' I replied. He didn't seem convinced and finally he asked: 'Oh, so if I were a great man I suppose they'd make a statue of me too?' 'Of course they would . . . but a great man is a thing you'll never become.' 'Who says so? Just suppose I became the Terror of Rome . . . I'd do in lots of people, the newspapers would talk about me, no one would find me . . . then they'd make a statue of me too.' At this I started laughing, though I didn't want to, because I knew where he got the idea of becoming the Terror of Rome—a few days earlier we had been to a film whose name was *The Terror of Chicago*. And I answered: 'Doing people in isn't the way to become great . . . What an ignoramus you really are . . . Those are great men who never did anyone in.' 'Well then, what did they do?' 'Oh, they wrote books.' He was fed up when I said this as he was almost illiterate, but in the end he said: 'For all that I'd like to have a statue. Honour bright, I'd like it . . . so people would remember me.' I said to him: 'You're a real imbecile and I'm ashamed of you . . . but there's no use explaining, it would be a waste of breath'.

But enough of that. We mooched along still further and then we went on to the terrace of the Pincio. There were some cars there and people had got out and were admiring the panorama of Rome. We went to stare too. You could see the whole of Rome looking like a cake burned black, with lots of cracks of light, each one being a street. There was no moon but it wasn't dark and I showed Lorusso the dome of St. Peters which was black against the starry sky. He said: 'Just think, supposing I was the Terror of

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Rome . . . then all the people in all those houses would do nothing but think of me and be occupied by me, while I'—here he made a gesture as though he wanted to threaten Rome—'each night I'd go out and do someone in, and no one would find me.' 'You're completely cracked,' I answered, 'and you oughtn't ever to go to the cinema . . . In America they've got tommy-guns and cars and are organized. There you have people who go about it in a big way. But you, who are you? A cheese-eating bumpkin with a spanner inside your coat.' At this he grew angry and shut up. Finally he said: 'The view is fine, there are no two ways about it . . . I've understood at last . . . tonight there's nothing doing and we're going to bed.' 'What do you mean?' I asked. 'I mean you've lost the urge and you're afraid.' He was always behaving like that, however things turned out. He would get distracted and begin thinking of something else and then throw the blame on me and accuse me of being a coward. I answered: 'Come on, you fool . . . I'll soon show you if I'm afraid'.

We went along a very dark pathway by the parapet that looks over the road to Muro Torto. Here, too, there were benches with plenty of couples, but for one reason or another I saw it was no good and made signs to Lorusso to keep on moving. At one point we saw two in a really dark and lonely place and I almost thought yes, but at that very moment two guards on horseback passed and the couple went away for fear of being seen. So, keeping to the parapet, we arrived at the part of the Pincio by the arch over Muro Torto. There there's a pavilion surrounded by an enclosure with a hedge of laurels reinforced by barbed wire. But on one side a little wooden gate is always open. I knew that pavilion because I'd slept there some nights when I hadn't even enough money to pay for the porter's hammock. It's a kind of penthouse with windows looking out on to the arch, and inside they keep gardening tools, flower pots, and a number of those marble busts whose noses and heads have been broken by little boys—so as to mend them. We went to the parapet and Lorusso sat on it and lit a cigarette. He was swinging unsteadily on the parapet with a bold and saucy air, and at that moment I felt such dislike for him that I seriously thought of giving him a shove and sending him over. He would have gone flying fifty yards and have been crushed like an egg on the pavement of Muro Torto. Then I could have run down and taken his fine shoes that I so hungered

for. I felt furious when I thought that for a moment I had imagined I disliked Lorusso enough even to kill him. But the real motive was still those cursed shoes, and granted he had those shoes on whether it was Lorusso or whether it was someone else made not a jot of difference to me. Indeed, I might really have pushed him over because I was sick of mooching around and he got too much on my nerves, if, as luck would have it, two black shadows hadn't passed by, arms entwined, almost touching us—a couple. By the side gate the woman seemed to be resisting, and I heard the man murmur: 'In we go here'. She replied: 'But it's so dark'. And he: 'Does that matter?' Finally, to cut the story short, she yielded and they opened the gate and in they went and disappeared in the enclosure.

Then I turned to Lorusso and said to him: 'There we've got what we want. They've gone into the penthouse to be quieter. Now we turn up as plain clothes policemen. We pretend to raise a regular fine and we take away their cash.'

Lorusso chucked his cigarette away, jumped down from the parapet with an air of decision and said to me: 'Yes, but I want the girl'. I stood petrified and asked: 'What do you mean?' He repeated: 'I want the girl . . . Don't you get me . . . I mean I want to take her.' Then I understood and said: 'What, are you really cracked? Plain clothes policemen don't grab girls.' And he: 'What's that to me?' His voice was queer as though strangled and though I couldn't see his face I could tell from his voice that he was dead serious. I replied firmly: 'In that case we do nothing'. 'But why?' 'Because we don't . . . When you're with me women aren't molested.' 'And if I wanted to?' 'You'd get a hiding as there's a God in heaven.' He said: 'You're a coward,' and I, coldly, 'You're a fool'. Then, in the frenzy of his desire for a woman that I was stopping him from venting, said he suddenly: 'Very well, then. I won't touch the girl. But I'll do the man in.' 'But why, you fool, why?' 'That's the way it is, either the woman or the man.'

Meanwhile time was passing and I was fuming because an opportunity like this mightn't occur again. And finally I said: 'Very good . . . if that's how it must be. I mean, you do him in only if I make a sign like this.' And I passed my hand over my forehead and eyes. Heaven knows why, perhaps because of his stupidity, Lorusso fell in with this immediately and replied: 'fine,

fine'. I made him repeat his promise that he wouldn't move unless I gave the signal, and then we pushed the gate open and we too entered the enclosure.

On one side, against the parapet, was the little cart that in day-time is drawn by a donkey and takes children joy-riding through the pathways of the Pincio. In the corner between the parapet and the gate was a lamp that spread its light across the enclosure and through the windows into the penthouse. In the penthouse you could see a whole lot of pots arranged in order of size and behind the pots some of those marble busts, placed on the ground and looking funny, white, and motionless like people sticking out of the earth from the chest up. For a moment I couldn't see the couple, then I guessed they were out of the lamp-light at the end of the shed. The corner was dark but the girl was half in the lamp's rays and I could tell it was her by the white hand she let hang inertly against the dark background of her cloak during the kiss. Then I pushed the door open and said: 'Who's there? What are you doing here?'

The man came forward immediately without hesitation, while the woman held back in the corner, perhaps to set her dress in order or in the hope that she wouldn't be seen. He was a young and short man with a big head and almost no neck, with a fat face and skin-level eyes and protruding lips. Sure of himself as I could see immediately, and disagreeable. Without thinking I lowered my eyes to his feet and looked at his shoes, and saw they were new and the kind I like, American style with level soles and stitched like moccasins. He didn't seem a bit frightened and this got on my nerves and my face started jumping with the tic more than ever. He asked: 'And who may you be?'

'Police,' I answered. 'Don't you know that kissing in public places is against the law. You've committed an offence. And you, miss, you come forward too . . . it's no use trying to hide.'

She obeyed and came up beside her lover. As I must have said already she was a little taller than him, slender, with a narrow waist, and a long black cloak that came down to her feet. She was pretty, with a little madonna face and long black hair and big black eyes and very serious looking: not a bit made up, so that if I hadn't seen her kissing with him I wouldn't have thought she was that kind.

'Don't you know, miss, that it's forbidden to kiss in public

places,' I said to her, and then 'Shame on such a nice girl . . . kissing in the dark in the gardens like any prostitute.' The girl began to protest, but the man stopped her with a gesture and then turned to me with an insolent air: 'Ah, I've broken the law, have I? Then show me your papers.'

'What papers?'

'Your identity papers that show you really are two policemen.'

It occurred to me he might belong to the police himself. It wouldn't have surprised me, given my bad luck. But I said fiercely: 'Less chatter. You've broken the law and you must pay.'

'Pay, indeed.' He talked quickly like a lawyer and you could see he wasn't frightened. 'Police, indeed . . . With faces like yours. He with that jacket and you with those shoes. Hi, what do you take me for?'

When I heard him reminding me of my shoes that really were cracked up and shapeless and couldn't be a policeman's, I got into a sort of fury, I pulled the pistol out of my raincoat and stuck it into his stomach and said: 'All right, we aren't police . . . but hand out your cash all the same and no fooling.'

Up to then Lorusso had stayed beside me without a word, mouth open, idiot that he was. But when he saw I had stopped playing around he woke up too. 'You understand,' he said, sticking the spanner under the man's nose. 'Out with your cash if you don't want to get this on the head.'

This interruption annoyed me even more than the haughty bearing of the man. When the girl saw the iron instrument she let out a little scream. And I said politely, for I can be polite when I want to: 'Don't take him to heart, miss. He's cracked. Be quiet, you'll come to no harm. Go back to the corner you were in before and leave us alone . . . And you put away that iron.' Then I said to the man: 'And now let's shell out'.

It must be admitted that for all his repulsiveness the young man had courage enough. Even now that I was holding the pistol shoved into his stomach he showed no fear. He simply put his hand to his breast and drew out his pocket-book. I felt him over, going through his pockets, and I could tell by how they felt that he hadn't got much cash. 'Now give me your watch,' I said. He slipped his watch off his wrist and gave it to me. 'Here's the watch.' It was a steel watch and it wasn't worth much. 'Now give me your fountain pen.' He drew his pen out of his pocket. 'Here's

my pen.' The pen was a fine one, American, with a retractable nib, the aerodynamic kind. Now there was nothing more to ask him for. But I'd been struck by his lovely new shoes and then I knew there wasn't much money in his pocket-book and I wanted something to make up. 'Anything else you want?' he said ironically. And without hesitating I answered: 'Yes, off with your shoes.'

This time he protested. 'My shoes, no.' And then I resisted no longer. From the first moment I had been feeling tempted to give him a crack on that repulsive and disagreeable face of his and I wanted to see what effect it would have on him and on me. So I said: 'Off with your shoes . . . don't play the fool,' and with my free hand I gave him a slap half front on. He grew redder and redder and then whiter and whiter, and I saw he was on the point of leaping at me. Then, luckily, the girl shouted at him from the corner: 'Yes, Gino, give them whatever they want'. He was biting his lips till they bled and staring straight at me, and then he said: 'Very well then,' and bowed his head and began to unlace his shoes. He took them off one after the other and before handing them to me he gave them a glance of regret. He liked them too.

Shoeless he was really short, even shorter than Lorusso; and I understood why he had bought a pair of shoes with such thick soles. It was then that the mistake happened. He was in his stockinged feet, and he asked me: 'What do you want now? My shirt too?' I was holding his shoes in my hands and was just on the point of saying that that was enough when something grazed my forehead.

It was a little spider descending on its thread from the ceiling of the penthouse—I saw it almost immediately. But with my armed hand I made a gesture as if to ward it off my forehead and eyes. Lorusso, brute that he was, thought I had made him the sign and he quickly lifted the spanner and administered a huge blow on the back part of the man's head. I could hear the thump myself, it was strong and dull as if it had fallen on a brick. And immediately the man fell on me as if to embrace me like a drunkard; and then he slid down, his face upturned backwards and his eyes twisted so that you only saw the whites. Immediately the girl gave a sharp scream and rushed from the corner to his motionless form, calling on him by name. To give an idea of what an imbecile Lorusso is, it's enough to say that in the midst of that confusion he

lifted his spanner again over the head of the kneeling girl and asked me with a look if he had to do the same trick on her as he had on the lover. I screamed at him: 'Are you mad? Let's get going.' And so we escaped.

No sooner were we on the road once more than I said to Lorusso: 'Now walk slowly as if you were taking a stroll. You've done enough foolery for today.' He slowed down his pace and without stopping I stuck the shoes in my raincoat, one in each pocket.

As we walked along I said to Lorusso: 'But then I don't need to tell you you're a fool . . . Whatever made you think of giving a thump like that?' He looked at me. 'You gave the sign,' he answered. 'The sign, indeed! It was a spider grazing my forehead.' 'How was I to know about that? You gave me the sign.' I was feeling so mad with him at that moment that I could have throttled him. I said furiously: 'You're a prize fool. Now you must have gone and killed him.' But he protested as though I were defaming him: 'I gave it him with the wrong end. Where there isn't the spike. If I'd wanted to kill him I would have given him one with the spike.' I said nothing, but I was so eaten up with rage, and my face was jumping so much with the tic, that I put my hand to my cheek to make it stay still. He began again: 'You saw what a lovely girl. I was just going to say to her: 'Come on, beautiful . . . she being ready . . . I did wrong not trying.' He walked along satisfied as though preening himself and went on to say what he would like to have done to the girl and how he'd have done it. Until I said: 'Listen. Shut your nasty mouth and keep quiet. Otherwise I won't answer for the consequences. He went quiet, and in silence we traversed Piazzale Flaminio, Lungotevere and the bridge and got to Piazza della Libertà. At that point there are benches in the shadow of the trees and there was even a bit of mist coming up from the Tiber. I said: 'Let's sit down here a minute . . . in that way we'll see how much we've made. And then I want to try on the shoes.'

We sat on the bench and first of all I opened the pocket-book and found it only contained two thousand lire so we went half and half. Then I said to Lorusso: 'You don't deserve anything. But I'm just and I'll give you the pocket-book and the watch. I'll keep the shoes and the fountain pen. All right?' He immediately protested: 'It's far from all right. What a way of going on.

Where's the half and half?' And I became angry. 'But it's you who made the mistake. It's right you should pay.' So we argued quite a bit and in the end we agreed I should keep the pocket-book, which was old and torn, and the shoes, and he should take the pen and the watch.

But I said to him: 'What will you do with the pen? You can't even write your name.' And he: 'As far as it goes I can read and write. I went to junior elementary school. And then they'll always buy a pen like that in Piazza Colonna.'

I had given way because I was longing to throw away my rotten old shoes and I was sick of arguing, and then my jitters had ended by giving me stomach-ache. So I took off my shoes and tried on the new ones. But I was disappointed to find they weren't big enough. So I said to Lorusso: 'Look, the shoes are too small. But they're just your fit. Let's exchange, you give me yours that are too big for you and I'll give you these that are better and newer than yours.' This time he gave a long whistle as though of contempt and answered: 'Poor fellow, I may be an imbecile as you say, but I'm not such a one as that.' 'What do you mean?' 'I mean it's bedtime.' He looked at the young man's watch pompously and added: 'It's eleven thirty by my watch. What time do you make it?' I said nothing, but put the shoes back into my raincoat pocket and followed him.

So we went back to Piazzale Flaminio. We took the tram and the whole time I was eaten up thinking of the injustice of my fate and thinking what an imbecile Lorusso was and what I should do to make him give me his shoes in exchange for mine. As we were getting off the tram in our neighbourhood I began to argue again and then, seeing reason wasn't any good, I implored him: 'Lorusso, those shoes are life and death to me . . . Without shoes I can't live . . . If you don't want to do it to please me, at least do it for the love of God.' We were now back in a deserted street near Via Merulana. He stopped under a lamp-post and began twisting his foot this way and that in a conceited way just so as to make me furious. 'So my shoes are fine ones, are they? They make you jealous, eh? But it's no good getting in a sweat. That won't make me give them.' And then he began singing softly:

'You may be clever,
You've never had them, you'll get them never.'

I was feeling all in. I bit my lip and I swear that if I'd had any bullets in the pistol I would have killed him not only because of the shoes but also because I just couldn't stick him any more. This way we got to the hang-out where we slept.

We knocked at the basement window. The porter, grumbling as usual, came to open, and we went into the hang-out. There there were five hammocks in a row, in the first three slept the porter and his two sons, who were young fellows like us; in the last two Lorusso and myself. The porter made us pay in advance, then he switched out the light and went to bed, leaving us in the darkness to grope for our hammocks and lie down.

But once I had got under the thin blanket I began to think of the shoes and at last made up my mind. I'd get up in the darkness, I'd put on Lorusso's shoes leaving him mine, and then I'd make off, pretending to go to the W.C. outside, beyond the entry of the hang-out. I thought this was a specially good idea because maybe Lorusso had killed the man in the penthouse and if so it was better not to stay with him. Lorusso only knew my Christian name, not my full name, so if they arrested him he wouldn't be able to say who I was. And so in a nutshell I got up, lowered my feet and slowly bent down and put on Lorusso's shoes. Just as I was lacing them I felt a violent blow. Luckily I moved and the blow grazed my ear and caught me on the shoulder. In the darkness Lorusso had given me a crack with his accursed spanner. This time the pain made me lose my head and I got up and hit out at him blindly. He seized me round the chest, trying to get in another with the spanner, and we both rolled on the ground. With all that noise the porter and his two sons woke up and turned on the light. I yelled: 'Murderer' and Lorusso on his side yelled 'Thief', and the others were shouting too and trying to separate us. Then Lorusso gave the porter a bang with the spanner. The porter was a tough and it needed nothing to set him raging; so he seized a chair and tried to hit Lorusso on the head. Lorusso stood at the end of the hang-out, against the wall, shaking the spanner and screaming: 'Come on, if you've got the guts. I'll do you all in, every one of you . . . I'm the Terror of Rome.' Just like a lunatic, red in the face and his eyes staring out of his head.

At that point I was imprudent because I was beside myself and I shouted: 'Look out . . . a bit ago he killed a man . . . he's a murderer'. To put it in a word, while we tried to hold down Lorusso

who was bellowing and struggling like a madman, one of the porter's sons went to call the police. Would you believe it? At the station they just made one phone call and then they said we were the two who'd done the job in Villa Borghese. I said it was Lorusso and for once, perhaps owing to the bangs he'd had, he didn't deny. The officer said: 'Grand fellows you are . . . really grand fellows . . . armed theft and attempted homicide'.

But to show how insensitive Lorusso is, let me say that after a moment he seemed to pull himself together and he asked: 'What day is it tomorrow?' They answered: 'Friday'. And he rubbed his hands. 'Fine, tomorrow at Regina Caeli it's bean soup.' Furthermore that's how I found out he'd been locked up before, though he'd always sworn to me they'd never put him in prison. Then I looked at my feet and saw I still had on Lorusso's shoes and thought after all I'd got what I wanted.

[*Translated by* BERNARD WALL]

II—THERE IS NOWHERE TO GO

ROY BONGARTZ

CHARLES THORPE pushed his way down the gang-plank to the pier, the darkening New York sky above him. People were calling to one another, meeting and embracing and talking loudly, and it took Thorpe an hour to get clear of them and through the officials. He saw New York again after two years, and absently remarked the river of cars flowing along the West Side Drive.

He was still a little troubled about breakfast on board that morning, when he hadn't been able to decide whether to take a small box of Wheaties or a small box of Grape Nuts. He had stood in line in the cafeteria, staring dumbly at the assortment of breakfast foods, and had narrowed the choice to those two, but somehow could go no further. After he had held up the line a moment there were murmurs and then calls to move on, and a cook had smiled at first and said, 'Well, what'll you have this morning?' But when he hadn't moved, the cook stared at him and threw him a little box of Wheaties.

He took a cab uptown to a bar off Broadway, near the university, where he and his friends had spent many evenings while attending school. The bartender looked up from behind the chrome-trimmed bar, reflected in a mirror in back of it. A blue neon Pabst sign on the mirror diffused soft light over the rows of bottles. 'Hey, there!' the bartender called. 'Isn't that you, Charlie? When did you get back?'

'Just got in,' he replied, shaking hands. 'How's everything with you? Any of the boys around?'

'They still come in once in a while, Charlie. Have a drink.' He set two beers on the bar, and Charlie vaguely contemplated his image behind the bar, light, thin hair above grey eyes and a rather narrow face, sharp chin. 'Drink up,' said the bartender, and they touched glasses. 'How's things in Europe?'

'Getting better, but it depends on which country . . .'

'Yeah,' said the bartender, 'they're getting back on their feet. Friend of mine, come back from Ireland, was telling me . . .'

'Did you get to Rome?' a man broke in, sitting beside Thorpe at the bar.

Thorpe looked over at a heavy, middle-aged man. 'It was back a year ago when I took a trip down to . . .'

'Got relatives over there,' the man said, and addressed both Thorpe and the bartender, telling them of what his relatives had written to him about what one could buy and what one couldn't buy, about something being good and something being bad. Several other people at the bar looked over at him and listened.

'No, no!' Thorpe interrupted, a bit loudly. These little modern axioms, these favourite facts of theirs and repeated formulas, what were they trying to prove to themselves? What was there to say, really? 'You don't understand,' he told them.

'What do you mean?' the heavy man protested. 'I got relatives in Rome. They *live* there!'

'All right,' said Thorpe, 'but there are millions of people, and . . .' he paused a moment, 'and it's changing; everything is changing.' He stopped himself, puzzled.

'Like I was saying,' another man put in, 'things are different now, over there. Before the war you could . . .'

Thorpe felt a hand on his shoulder and looked around. Bert! Hello!

'Greetings, Charlie. You just get in? Good to see you.'

'My boat just pulled in.'

'You want to stay at the bar, or take a booth?'

Charlie stared at his friend a moment. 'Sure,' he said, and looked blankly at the row of booths, then back to Bert.

Bert waited a moment, then took his arm as they went to a booth. 'Rough trip, eh? You still look a little green.'

'No, it was an easy crossing. It's probably the blue light in here. What have you been doing?'

'Painting, mostly. Doing a series of sort of street scenes I call "The World in New York". The idea is to get a feeling of each of the nationalities in different parts of the city, like the East Side, and Yorktown, and Harlem and everywhere. Get a few types to represent the whole quarter, you know. I'm going to have a showing pretty soon. And then there's always school; I'm majoring in Spanish. How about you, Charlie?'

'Yeah. Well, the paintings are a good idea, Bert, only . . . ah, as for me, well, I just got back. I was studying French over there, you know, and travelling, and . . .'

'Do any more writing? That's what you used to do, isn't it?'

'That's right.' They ordered more beer. The people at the bar were still talking loudly, all at once, about Europe: the Marshall Plan, the atomic bomb, the Russians.

'You don't look so hot, old man,' Bert said, watching Thorpe closely. 'You don't want to leave, do you? Where are you staying?'

Thorpe looked up a bit wildly. His face had become paler, and he knocked over a glass of beer. 'I'm always knocking over my beer. Bert, why don't they stop talking? Why don't you shut them up?'

'Shut who up?'

'All those people at the bar. Listen to them. They're talking about Europe. No one knows anything about Europe, Bert, especially Europeans, if not especially people in bars. They're talking too much. No!' he yelled at the people. 'No! You're wrong!'

'They didn't say anything to you, Charlie. You don't even know what they were talking about.'

Several men came over to the table from the bar. 'You don't know what you're talking about, fella,' one of them said to Thorpe.

'There is hardly anything to talk about, mister, hardly anything at all. So then it doesn't matter very much.'

'Leave him alone,' someone else said.

Bert got up. 'Hey, Charlie, why don't we take off, eh? You look tired, my friend. Let's go.' The people had gone back to the bar.

'That's fine, Bert,' said Thorpe, not moving. He looked open-faced and questioning at his friend.

'All right? Shall we go?' Bert asked, standing uncertainly by the table. There was no reply, and Bert stared at Thorpe, sitting there. 'What the hell? Are you drunk? We've had only two beers. What were you drinking before I came in, Charlie?'

'Beer. One beer, offered me by the management, happy to see me upon my return from an extended trip in Europe.'

'Yes,' said Bert. 'Where are you staying, Charlie?' He sat down again.

Thorpe rubbed his hand over his eyes and forehead in vast resignation, and looked around the walls of the room at the beer advertisements. 'Were my eye to stick upon one colour, one shape, it might all begin again. But then,' he went on, waving his hand, 'we would again end up here quite soon. Right here where I am, Bert, and where you won't admit you are. Not yet you won't, will you, Bert?'

'Come on, come on, Charlie. Where the hell do you live? I'll take you home. . . . Where won't I admit I am, Charlie?'

'Where I am. Up until I got to the café, I was heading somewhere, for this bar if nowhere else. Oh, I directed myself here, and there, and I did this and saw that and learned something else and considered doing even other things. But once arrived, let us admit that one has arrived, shall we?'

'That's good, Charlie. Now let's go and arrive at your place, and you can sleep this off.'

'You haven't even guessed it, Bert, so I shall tell you, but don't let it get out. There is nowhere to go.'

The bartender came over to the table. He had ushered the others out of the bar and had piled the chairs on the tables. He was turning off the lights. 'Time to go, gentlemen.'

Bert got up again, then stopped to look at Thorpe. 'For the last time, Charlie, where do you live? Let's go.' Thorpe put his chin in his hands and smiled up at his friend. 'See you outside, then,' said Bert, and went out.

At the door the bartender waited a moment, then called, 'Charlie!' He got no answer, and went back to the booth, at the rear of the room, now in the dark. 'What's the matter, old man? Somebody slip you a mickey?'

'Friend bartender, I hate to impose upon you, but . . . What is your name, anyway?'

'Harry.'

'Look, Harry, neither is there anywhere to go, nor is there anything to do. Therefore I might as well stay here.'

'Come on, Charlie. You'll feel better tomorrow. Come on.'

'If you throw me out, Harry, I'll only be miserable sitting in front of your door all night until you open, and then you'd either have to carry me in again or send me away in a truck or something.'

'Look, old man . . . what the hell are you talking about?'

'I can't move. I couldn't move from here to the bar if you were giving away free beer.'

'What do you mean? You're paralysed, or something?'

'You could call it that, I suppose.'

'Then let's call an ambulance before it gets worse. It might get to your head. Jeez, you better do something, Charlie!'

'Not a hospital, no, no. Look, there just isn't anywhere to go. Isn't that plain? Isn't that clear, Harry?' He spotted Bert outside, looking through the plate-glass, and waved to him. Bert turned and went away.

Harry looked quizzically at the young man in his booth. 'You mean you really like it, staying in my booth?'

'Now we're getting somewhere. Look. Here is one buck, for which I rent the booth tonight. All right?'

'Ah, but Charlie, if you're paralysed, we'd better call a doctor.'

'You've had a long day, Harry. Why not close up? If you really want more explanation, I'll give it to you tomorrow. I'm really being very polite about this, you know, Harry.'

'Sure, but you see, when a guy runs a café . . .'

'Harry, you know me, don't you? Look, I wouldn't break into your stocks or anything. You know better than that. Now go the hell to bed. I'll be here in the morning.'

Harry, tired and muddled, went into the back-room and up the stairs. 'Want an aspirin or anything?' he called back, suddenly.

'No, thanks, Harry.'

'OK, Charlie.'

A week later a blond-haired, slightly built young man ran up the steps of the subway into the afternoon light and noise of Broadway and darted around the people on the sidewalk, heading for Harry's bar. A newsboy called out, 'Bar-sitter enters second week! Read all about it!' as he passed. He went on and rushed into a crowd of people around the door of the bar.

'Hey, not so fast!' a policeman called to him. 'Get in a line there!'

'But it's Thorpe in that bar!'

'Thorpe, Schnorpe, he's not the only nut in this town. How he rates the attention is beyond me. Hell, he doesn't even do anything.'

'Let me through, will you? He's a friend of mine.'

The officer looked him over. 'He is, eh? All right, go on in and join the rest of them. You a doctor?'

'No, no, he's just a friend of mine.'

'Well, they've got friends and doctors, too. Go ahead.' He pushed through the crowd to let the young man get in. Harry was doing great business, with three new bartenders to handle the crowd. The line of people continued to the back of the room, where everyone could get a look into Thorpe's booth. In the back-room of the café were several men adjusting a radio control board and testing a microphone.

The young man pushed his way through to the booth. A man with a notebook was saying, 'Now, Mr. Thorpe, we might make this clearer, I think, by putting it this way: you were disillusioned by the decadent influences in Europe which were evident in . . .'

'Jackson,' Thorpe cried, seeing the young man who had pushed his way into view. 'Where did you come from?'

'See here, Charlie, this is foolishness, and it certainly is not original. Pardon me,' he added as he stepped on the foot of the interviewer. 'May I sit down?'

'Sure. Pull up a knee. Wait a minute, wait a minute. How many of you people are reporters?' Four of them sitting in the booth admitted to it. 'Jackson, how many reporters do you think we need?'

'I'm sure we need none, nor anyone else. You were always telling everyone not to do anything radical, and now look at you.'

'Radical,' a reporter repeated, writing in a note-book.

'All right, you reporters go home. Shall we keep the doc?'

'You'd better, Charlie; we may need him.'

The doctor looked up and smiled briefly at Jackson, who called for the bartender. 'Look, will you get the cop to let this man have a little air? Get this crowd out of here!' He had to yell to be heard above the people who kept calling out to Thorpe, 'Don't let 'em scare you, Thorpe!' 'Keep that seat, Thorpe, keep that seat!' and from others, 'What're you breathing for, Thorpe?' and 'Don't break your hand lifting them beer glasses!'

'They're unimaginative today,' said Thorpe. The policeman broke up the line and pushed most of the people out of the bar. There were great cries of protest about rights to enter bars and this being a free country, but at last Thorpe and Jackson were alone with the doctor.

'Have you known Mr. Thorpe a long time?' the doctor asked.

'I knew him in college. Quite a long while. Are you nuts, Charlie?' he asked. 'Is he sick?' he asked the doctor.

Both the doctor and Thorpe began to talk, then both stopped. 'Like everyone, I'm sick,' Thorpe said after a pause, 'only I know it. Hey, Harry, two beers! Beer's free. Rheingold's giving me all I want, for publicity. And a couple of outfits want me to endorse arm-chairs.' Thorpe gave him the story, then, of the breakfast on the boat, the uncertain trip to the bar, and of the voluntary paralysis which had followed. 'Only it isn't voluntary, because I didn't figure to do this, or not to. The way I see it, for me, there is nothing to do. Nothing I can think of to do next. I'm stopped. If I thought it was deplorable, I'd do something about it, but I don't think anything about it. These people have become rather excited, and it's about nothing, perfectly about nothing. You know, you have little decisions to make all the time, where to go today, what to do tonight, and I've been making them regularly like everyone else until I got to this bar. Deciding to come here was the last one I could make.'

Jackson stared at his friend. 'To see this, I come all the way from Chicago. I started off as soon as I saw your picture in the paper. I thought it was a big joke.' He studied Thorpe for several minutes carefully, then reached and grabbed him by his coat. 'Come on, Charlie! You've making a damned fool out of yourself!' He pulled him up out of the seat and against the table, in a rage, glaring at him. 'You damned fool!' Then Thorpe was on the floor, and the doctor was beside him, pulling him back into his seat.

Jackson started out of the room, but the doctor followed him and stopped him, while Thorpe watched them. 'It's no good, Jackson, it's no good,' he said.

'Wait,' the doctor said to Jackson. 'Maybe you can help us. What did he do at college, when you knew him?'

Jackson was still angry. 'I don't know what he did. He was all right.' They talked quietly at the bar while Thorpe watched from the booth. When the radio men approached the table with their microphone, Jackson shook hands with the doctor and left.

Thorpe didn't see his friend for another week. The bar was now guarded by three policemen, who let in only those with special passes: doctors, psychiatrists, reporters and friends Thorpe wanted to see. There were enough of these people to keep Harry busy, and with the publicity he was content to have the famous bar-sitter stay as long as he liked. There were regular radio interviews, a television programme during which he drank Rheingold, smiled vacantly and declined fabulous propositions to accept new cars, flying trips, proposals of marriage, evenings with movie stars, and all kinds of merchandise from people looking for publicity. The television men had wanted to bring in a girl from the Diamond Horseshoe to make love to him to see what he would do, but the doctor wouldn't allow it. It was all the same to Thorpe. The doctor had been worried about the publicity, and would have stopped all of it, but Thorpe told him it made these people happy and didn't make any difference anyway.

Then one afternoon Jackson came in, with Bert. They went to the table, and Bert said, 'Hello, here's our famous friend'. There was a young woman with Thorpe, taking notes. She introduced herself as a reporter, and they all sat down. Immediately Harry served them Rheingold. 'Well,' said Bert, 'you're still here. How is it?'

'All right,' said Thorpe. He appeared lifeless.

Bert and Jackson began talking about the old days in college, when Thorpe had been full of spirit and ideas to write great works in order to bring the peoples of the world together. They quoted him, they repeated his old arguments, they recounted Thorpe's verbal victories over cynics less well-versed than he had been. Thorpe could see that they had planned it; it was obvious to everyone, but that didn't matter, because it was true, he had said

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and done these things. They followed it up to the day he had abruptly left for Europe to get away from the doubt and the sceptics and the people who wouldn't listen at all.

Jackson looked closely at his friend. 'Charlie, what you need is a typewriter, that's all. Let's hear about it all, tell us about it, tell everyone. Do something about it!'

'What do you want me to do?' Thorpe cried out. 'What in Christ's name do you want me to say?' He thundered and swore at his friend.

The doctor was upset. 'Take it easy, gentlemen. Let's not get excited about this, now.'

'All right,' said Jackson. 'Didn't you go to the eastern European countries? Didn't you find something to set you off, there, one way or another?'

The reporter looked up. 'Sure, I went there, Jackson,' said Thorpe.

'Isn't there anything to say about that, Charlie?'

'Doesn't help any, because it's not any different. It all adds up to the same thing.' The reporter took some notes about Thorpe's travels in the eastern countries. Perhaps his paralysis, as some called it, or bar-sitting, as others called it, was another evil of Communism?

'Take a look at these, then, Charlie.' Jackson brought out a stack of newspapers from different cities. 'You're a leader, my boy, you're a hero! Here's a good one: the entire senior class of Hamilton high school has been in a bar for the last three days and shows no sign of leaving. There is at least one bar-sitter in every bar in Palo Alto, California.'

'Where is Hamilton high school?' Thorpe asked.

'Ohio,' replied Jackson. 'And look at these editorials. The *Times* says, "The value of this latest fad should be seen only as that of another attention-getting trick by an unbalanced few. Yet the moral effects on the youth of the country could become detrimental." You see, Charlie. You're leading a new thought movement. You're a philosopher, and so far as I've heard, you haven't said a word. Look here, the pacifists are behind you, and there are some Buddhists backing you up, too. They're also in California, by the way. Why not go out there, Charlie? That is, if you thought you could make it to the station. Or we could carry you, couldn't we, Bert?'

'Sure,' said Bert. 'The *Daily Worker* denounced you today, too, for the first time, Charlie. Up to now they've been quiet on the subject. Everybody's either denouncing you or joining up.'

'How have you been eating lately, Charlie?' Jackson asked.

'Pretty well.'

'Why?'

'Hunger. Basic drive. You figure I'm trying to kill myself? You never did get the point, did you, Jackson?'

Harry came over to the table. 'Say, Charlie, there's a delegation of anti-somethings who want to see you. Shall I let them in?'

'What are they against?' Bert asked. 'Hell, I'll go and see.' He was back in a minute. 'Well, Charlie, here's a good chance for you. They're anti-vivisectionists, and they want your support. They've figured, somehow, that your attitude shows that you are basically with them.'

Thorpe looked out at a group of agitated people in front of the bar. 'What do they do, cut up animals or something? How in hell did I ever get into this, anyway? I only came in for a beer.'

'No, you've got them all wrong, hasn't he, Harry?' Jackson said. 'They don't want to cut up any animals. That's just it.'

Bert spoke up. 'I see here in the paper there's a guy who'll give you good rates to move up on his flagpole. Why not? I might even take him up on it myself, Charlie.'

'God damn it, I'm not leading anything!' Thorpe shouted. He pushed himself to his feet and stood, then walked away from the table, painfully, as if in slow motion. There were cheers and yells outside as he pushed open the door into the crowd. 'Get away!' he cried. 'Get away!' He went on heavily through the people, but more came, surrounded him. He dragged himself up Broadway, stiffly, his legs hurting him.

A young boy ran up to him, pulling at his clothing. 'Hey mister, we all gonna drop dead, hey? That the big idea, mister? We all gonna drop dead?' Thorpe struck out at the boy and caught him in the mouth, then began to run, a weak jagged running, his knees folding under him at every step, the crowd growing larger, people joining it everywhere, yelling, crying out at him.

'Let me go!' he shouted, and ran on, striking out at everyone in his path, and he knew now what he really wanted to do, what

he had always wanted, and it was to run, to run, to run, away from these people, all of them, everyone, to get away. He must have hit someone too hard, pushed someone into a window, for the police caught him easily, stopped him, and he was still running from them, sprinting away faster and faster, even as they helped him into their truck.

JAMES THRALL SOBY

LÉONID

'EVERY new painter in our era', Léonid Berman once remarked, 'must decide to be for or against Picasso.' He meant, of course, that a basic issue facing contemporary artists is whether to join the revolutionary procession led by the Spanish master, or to seek instead a lonelier course. Léonid himself, though he once made use of cubist-abstract precepts for which Picasso had been largely responsible, long ago made up his mind. Since the beginning of his mature career in the late 1920s he has been essentially a painter of reality, interpreting with rapt yet controlled devotion aspects of the tangible, seaside world that interest him deeply. He is, indeed, a scrupulous epicure of hour and place, of light and tide, of the physical and atmospheric subtleties which differentiate one coastal scene from another. His preference in seascape is for those places in which water, land, sky, and man are in close and ancient communion; he has no interest whatever in the ocean for its own sake or in those dramatic episodes of tempest admired by marine painters of an earlier time. His taste is confirmed by minute and sometimes oblique details. When, for example, he stands beside his 'Les Bouchots à Marée Haute' of 1937, he will first describe the exceptional flavour of the mussels scraped from the wooden weirs shown in his picture. 'Mussels are superb in that place', he explains, 'because of the wood to which they adhere and the gentle run of the sea.' His appreciation of a given fishing village extends to its people, boats and gear, to the sweep of its beach or the angle of its jetties. Once in Paris he drew with relish a map of the French harbours where he had worked, remembering the paintings he had derived from each. To understand how alien is his programme

to that of most members of the older generation, we need only recall locale's minor role in determining the great progressive movements of the earlier century. The Cubist alliance of Picasso and Braque flourished at Céret, it is true, but they could have painted what they did in another town and season.

I have already suggested, however, that Léonid's use of the scenic is carefully controlled, and it is a significant fact that when, at St. Tropez in the mid-1920s, he first settled definitively on his coastal subject matter, he worked under the guidance of the Cubist, Louis Marcoussis. Léonid cannot paint without the stimulus of an appropriate, external reality. Nevertheless, his subjects are transformed according to personal impulses which operate within the limits of a knowledgeable plastic discipline. He has not painted in the open air since his first professional years. His customary practice is to saturate his memory with impressions of a given scene, and then to execute a series of pictures at a nearby inn, insulated from excessive reality by the window-panes of his room. He seldom makes complete topographical drawings. He proceeds to an imaginative panorama through a reverence for local details, and gathers around him models of boats, fish traps, and other paraphernalia of the sea. Sand for him is an astonishingly rich and variable substance, and on its colour, texture, and patterns he lavishes an attention comparable to that which the Mannerist and Baroque painters reserved for precious cloth and furs.

Léonid's philosophy of painting was unquestionably affected by his training. Born in St. Petersburg in 1896 of a wealthy family, he was exiled by the Soviet Revolution, and took refuge in Finland. There, in 1918, Nicholas Roerich spoke to him enthusiastically about Maurice Denis as a teacher in Paris. Since Léonid had longed to live and paint in the French capital, he made his way to Paris the following year. He found that Denis was the director of the Académie Ranson, a small and rather informal school for painters which had been founded by one of Denis's colleagues in the group of symbolist artists, known as the 'Nabis', which had begun to meet in 1888 and to propound a new aesthetic based on Gauguin's synthetist discoveries. After Paul Ranson's death, his school was continued for his widow's benefit by his old associates, and among the teachers were Paul Sérusier, Félix Vallotton, Edouard Vuillard, Pierre Bonnard (who rarely appeared), and, of course, Denis.

Léonid studied at the Académie Ranson from 1920 to 1922. By that late date the symbolist-synthetist uprising had long since disbanded, of course. Yet something of its spirit persisted in the art of the school's instructors—a use of acute local characterization in conjunction with arbitrary dislocations of colour and space, an emphasis on spontaneity of emotional response. These are attributes of Léonid's own painting, however much it differs stylistically from that of his teachers, and it may be a meaningful fact that he should have continued to study at the fairly conservative Académie Ranson at a time when Picasso's bold, post-Cubist resurgence was everywhere felt in Paris, when the Purists were reducing the tenets of abstract art to a scholastic gospel. By temperament Léonid is unsuited both to insurrection and to dogma. While conceding that Monet was more of an innovator than Manet, he regards the latter as a finer painter; his own ceaseless regard for tonal values is based on experience rather than rote. In essence he remains an intimist like Vuillard and Bonnard, that is, a painter whose mainspring is an affectionate lyricism toward subjects he knows by heart. He still speaks respectfully of his masters at Ranson's school, though it cost him considerable effort to throw off Denis's insistence on dividing the palette into warm and cold tones, not ever to be mixed. Quite likely he outgrew this narrow doctrine through an independent study of the older masters, especially Brueghel, El Greco, Poussin, the brothers Le Nain, Canaletto, Guardi, and Corot.

Among Léonid's fellow-students at the Académie Ranson were his younger brother, Eugène, Christian Bérard, Thérèse Debains, Edouard Goerg, and Pierre Charbonnier. On leaving the school in 1922, these young artists worked together for a time in a studio at the apartment of Léonid's family on the Avenue Malakoff. In February 1926, with Pavel Tchelitchew, Kristians Tonny, and others, they held an exhibition at the Galerie Druet, whose director was Charbonnier's father-in-law and a brother of Thadée Natanson, the celebrated editor of the *Revue Blanche*. Previously Léonid had exhibited single works at the Salon des Indépendants, the Salon des Tuileries and the Salon d'Automne, and had had favourable notice from several critics. But the Druet exhibition won him a more general esteem. Its participants were soon labelled the 'Neo-Humanists' or the 'Neo-Romantics', first of all, I think, by Waldemar George. And despite the fact that the association of the

Druet painters was informal and of short duration, the phrase has had an abiding usefulness both in a practical and an historical sense. Like many group-titles, especially those externally applied rather than self-proclaimed, the epithet 'Neo-Romantics' served to launch a new movement, to dramatize the Druet artists' rejection of the predominantly architectonic premise of many of their elders, to point up their return to nostalgic, human sentiment. The group's theme was, and for its leaders has remained, man or his imprint on place.

At the time of the Druet exhibition, Léonid painted diverse subjects—landscape, figures, still life, portraits. Close to his brother and to Bérard, he travelled with them extensively in Italy. Presently, however, the three young men decided to go their separate ways as artists. Indeed, by the mid-1920s, their predilections were quite different, Bérard being most of all interested in the human figure, Eugène Berman in Renaissance and Baroque architecture, Léonid in the seaside. It was at St. Tropez on the French Riviera, as briefly noted, that Léonid decided to become a painter of marine subjects. From 1925 through 1928 he painted mostly along the Mediterranean coast of France, moving from one port or fishing village to another. Though continuing to work within the framework of an identifiable reality, he profited from Marcoussis's counsel in abstract design. A number of his pictures of this period, particularly certain views of Marseilles and Toulon, testify to a strong interest in an equilibrium of broad, angular forms, and the impressionism of his earlier years congeals into a more rigid order based on the Cubists' research. Yet the change was perhaps most of all disciplinary, and it never wholly obscured Léonid's passion for the lyric interpretation of particular environment.

The Mediterranean pictures were shown in one-man exhibitions at Paris, first at the Galerie Pierre (1926) and later at the Galerie Art Contemporain (1927). In 1929, weary of the Midi, Léonid moved north to Boulogne. There, and at Le Tréport the following year, he became for the first time, I think, a truly personal artist. To begin with, he abandoned the block-like forms so often used in his Mediterranean series, and relied more and more on what is almost certainly his greatest gift—a delicate control of opaque and translucent volumes. At Boulogne he discovered a theme to which he has returned persistently: a deep vista of sand and water,

with diminutive figures, portrayed as though viewed from a near, high cliff or from a low-flying balloon. Later on, affected by the Surrealists' revival of vast, enigmatic space, he elaborated the theme, but in 1929 he thought of it as stemming from the art of the abstractionists. His Boulogne paintings, with their zigzag allocation of sand and tide and titled perspective, may in fact owe something to the discoveries of Picasso's Cubist circle. But in them all sense of masonry construction has disappeared. The emphasis on atmospheric content has become pervasive, and is no longer forced into a cautious architectural framework, as it had been at Toulon and Marseilles. For geometry's impeccable edges Léonid had learned to substitute a romantic floodlighting which penetrates and illumines his flat and often curvilinear forms. The change was altogether happy. Whereas the Mediterranean pictures of 1925-8 seem a rather impersonal if skilled amalgam of impressionist with abstract traditions, the Boulogne series is sensuous and fresh.

Léonid did not, however, at this point renounce entirely the precedent of Cubism and its satellite movements. In early 1930, at Dieppe and Le Tréport (where, to avoid confusion with his brother, he changed his signature from 'Léonid Berman' to 'Léonid B.' or sometimes simply 'L.B.'), he steadily enlarged the scale of his figures. Remembering the hard-won liberties of the Cubists, he also used two different angles of perspective simultaneously, depicting the figures from normal eye-level, the backgrounds as if seen from above. The increase in human scale culminated in a series of small pictures showing single figures of fishermen or fisherwomen with huge nets (Plate 1). These paintings, too, reveal Léonid's continuing use of abstract elision, as in the featureless heads and 'unreal' backgrounds. But their mood is intensely romantic, their colours dark, rich, and encrusted, chiefly blacks, greens, and blues.

During the later months of his stay at Dieppe, Léonid became more nearly a realist than ever before. While retaining a broad, almost symbolist simplification of form in defining areas of beach, sea, and cliff, he began to characterize the postures and action of the Dieppe fisherfolk. Perhaps it was the sight of work-horses on the northern beaches that turned him in realism's direction, for he had made endless drawings of horses as a child, striving for a maximum accuracy in order to delight his mother. In any case, he completed

at Dieppe several close-up images of horses and their great-wheeled carts; his palette grew lighter, his use of chiaroscuro more Baroque. And at Trentemoult, in 1931 (where he dropped the 'B.' from his signature), the tendency toward a more direct interpretation of local scene continued, notably in a short series of pictures of fishermen drying their nets. These paintings, though still marked by the idyllicism which relates Léonid to such masters as the brothers Le Nain and the early Corot, are rather casual in composition, as though at this point the painter was most of all interested in seizing the essence of man's compact with region. Previously he had used the human figure either as a decorative accompaniment to landscape or as a dominant subject to which nature was a relatively abstract foil. But now he sought a synthesis to which man and specialized environment should make an equal contribution. A more precise reportage was necessary for his purpose; he celebrated the typical in the sense that Guardi and Canaletto had done so before him.

In the summer of 1931 Léonid moved to the island of Noirmoutier off the west coast near Nantes, and there found a new subject in the great salt marshes which had been cultivated by generations of peasants. The long rectangular stretches of bog, enclosed by narrow paths, revived his interest in far perspective, and he painted several vertical canvases almost entirely filled by marshes (Plate 2). The angle of vision, however, is less dramatic and exaggerated than in the Boulogne paintings of 1929; it is that of a very tall man standing on the flat ground rather than of an observer in a balloon or a figure on a cliff. The colours are tawny and limpid, and leave far behind the tenebrous chromatics of his earlier career.

After leaving Noirmoutier in the autumn, Léonid did no painting for a year and a half. Recently married, he went to live in the Dordogne, where he led an extremely primitive existence. One disaster followed another: his contract with the Parisian gallery of Jacques Bonjean was cancelled due to the depression; his marriage failed; and in 1933 he returned to Paris alone, penniless and with meagre hope for his future as an artist. But Christian Dior, now famous as a fashion designer but then a partner in Bonjean's gallery, lent him a house at Granville in Normandy. He began to work again, encouraged by the prospect of an exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York (the show took place in

the winter of 1935, and was followed by frequent exhibitions which established an American market for the painter's work). Léonid made rapid and impressive progress at Granville, though with characteristic humility he was afraid at the time that he had 'lost his hand'. Indeed, few paintings of his career seem more inspired and fluent than his 'Pêcheries et Viviers' of 1934 (Plate 3), with its panoramic sweep and salt-saturated atmosphere.

This picture and other works of the mid-1930s—painted at Granville, the island of Oléron, Etretat, Port-en-Bessin, and other harbours of western and northern France—often reveal the impact of the Surrealist aesthetic. Never a painter of Freudian fantasy, immune to the darker promptings of the subconscious mind, Léonid nevertheless has always had a strong sense of paradox. He likes and stresses those aspects of nature which, while retaining a basis in local fact, suggest the enigmatic and the strange. His horses in or near the water, his Noirmoutier scenes of land that is virtually sea, his fishermen wading unreasonably deep, his Portuguese sailors like Renaissance princes or protagonists of a ballet (Plate 5)—these are indications of an interest in the ambiguous side of nature's medal. The interest was confirmed rather than prompted by the art of the Surrealists, and it gives Léonid's painting an evocative air of discovery and reappraisal. If the properties of his quiet drama are natural in origin, he selects and distributes them with an instinct for poetic metaphor and provides them with an otherworldly ambience of light and space. It is the Surrealist, Yves Tanguy, to whom he seems most closely related in spirit. What image would result if Tanguy's world of sky were annealed with Léonid's world of sea? The conjecture is tempting, however impractical it may be.

In 1936 at Le-Grau-du-Roi, Basiège, and Fitou and in 1937 at Esnandes, the painter continued that patient consolidation of style which has distinguished his career as a whole. His colours at times become vigorous and contrasting, at other times reverted to close variations on an over-all tonality suggested by a given locale (Brittany, he says, is blue, and Normandy green). In particular during these years he achieved a notable eloquence in handling the spatial relationships of near, middle, and far ground, shifting the precision of focus with deft subtlety, as in the fine 'Enganes' (Plate 4). In 1937 he visited Italy for the first time since his early excursions with his brother and Bérard. By now,

however, he had become so thoroughly devoted to the coast of France that he had difficulty adjusting to the overwhelmingly architectural Italian scene. He painted several pictures of Florence, Cesenatico, and, above all, Venice, but in 1938 returned with a certain relief to the Channel area between Dieppe and Boulogne where, in fact, his mature career had begun.

The war years were intensely bitter for Léonid. A French citizen, he was mobilized in the army, and after its defeat worked for three years at forced labour on the construction of Hitler's Atlantic Wall near La Rochelle. He found it morally impossible to paint in the little time that remained his own. He worked with his fellow prisoners and waited and kept a diary, and in 1945 at last was able to resume his career at Carnac in Brittany. Almost at once his painting showed a new boldness and authority. During the long years of forced labour he had written in his diary: 'My painter's eye no longer rejoices in exuberance of colour, a vivid note, a harmonious form. Does it function only in a world of red, yellow or blue, where everything does not hide itself, is not khaki, and does not evoke war?' At Carnac in 1945 and 1946 he rediscovered his painter's world. And in 1947 on the coast of Portugal, in 1948 at Venice, which he now found eminently paintable, he brought to his art an elegiac quality more pronounced than ever before. An added maturity is evident in his post-war paintings, a greater flexibility and elegance, solidly grounded in lifelong reverence for medium (Plate 6).

Late in 1946 Léonid first came to America. He returned in 1948, and married the distinguished American harpsichordist, Sylvia Marlowe. He plans to make New York his permanent home, though he will visit Europe at intervals. For an artist to whom location means so much, this has been an important step, and many wondered whether he would find a suitable subject matter here. What troubled him most at first was the lack of affinity between figures on the American beaches and the beaches themselves. In the beginning he thought our seaside too large and bare; it seemed to lack the predictable ritual through which Europeans have earned their sustenance from the sea for countless generations; it was more likely to be populated by bathers or men in boats than by fishermen working *on foot*. Gradually, however, Léonid's eye has adjusted to the change, and lately he has found subjects that interest him deeply: the cove at Port Jefferson, Long Island;

a moss-covered live oak in Florida; the beaches at Provincetown, Massachusetts. His choice makes clear the essential privacy of his sense of the picturesque. One cannot tell beforehand what will hold his attention, though American friends have naturally tried; it is only after he has made his selection that it becomes for others quite inevitably his.

Unlike many of his elders, Léonid is not a painter whose invention is geared to annual exhibitions, to our era's craving for abrupt stylistic change and new pronouncement. He is a modest, steadfast, devoted artist, the sort whose name will never astound, but whose works, when one day seen in public galleries, may evoke for many a surprised and pleasurable response: 'There is a picture by that excellent painter, Léonid'.

RODERICK CAMERON

WHERE SHALL JOHN GO?

XIX: CEYLON

COLOMBO: the drive from Colombo to Galle is along the coast, through a forest of cocoa-nut palms, past thatched villages. The palms sweep outwards over the sands which are traced with the foam of a restless sea. The coastline is obscured by a mist as if seen through a veil of thin gauze—the spume from the waves.

Every so often we passed a palm, its trunk laced round with rope; looking up we noticed that all the palms in the vicinity were joined to it by ropes, double cables thrown from palm top to palm top. These are the toddy trees kept especially for the drawing of toddy. Toddy, I learn, is a liquor obtained from the cocoa-nut palm, 'in its fresh state being called "toddy", a sweet and refreshing beverage but once fermented becoming "arrack", an intoxicating spirit'. Once tapped, the flower will not bear fruit. But as each flower is capable of yielding from one to two hundred pints of toddy a day it pays to sacrifice them for this purpose.

The palm groves are divided up into holdings. The tree we have seen laced with rope the owner uses as his ladder, and once up among the plumed tops he need not descend again until he

has finished gathering his full complement of toddy. He clambers from tree to tree using the interlacing ropes as one used them in commando courses during the war.

Marshall, our Cingalese driver, is a mine of information—there is nothing he doesn't know; his country's legends; its history. He can even tell us the botanical names for all the plants and trees. The Bo, for instance, he informed us today is called *Ficus religiosa*. *Religiosa* because the Lord Buddha singled it out from among all other trees under which to meditate. We stop at one of the fruit markets on our way; Marshall wanted us to sample a jack-fruit, an enormous thing about the size of a large water-melon, green-yellow with a bespiked skin, armoured, as it were, like an armadillo.

The natives also use it while still unripened, pounding it and then cooking it, thus producing a kind of millet.

It's from the jack-tree, incidentally, that the Buddhist monks get the dye for their yellow robes. When young the wood is a golden butter-yellow.

From Hambantota to Bandarawela we pass through jungle and the Wirawila-Tissa bird sanctuary. We stop at a Rest House for a drink and the game laws posted up read like a psalm from the Book of Solomon. 'In the closed season it is strictly prohibited to shoot elephant, buffalo, sambhur, spotted deer, red or barking deer, paddy field or hog deer, pea fowl, spur fowl, grey partridge and painted partridge, jungle quail, bustard quail, golden plover, snipe, whistling teal or cotton teal or quacking duck.'

'It is prohibited to shoot the Ceylon magpie, Paradine fly-catcher, orange minivet, Malabar small minivet, southern hill mynah, or southern grackle, Indian pita, Indian roller, kingfisher, Ceylon hornbill, Ceylon hoopoe, Ceylon trogon, storks, purple heron, pond heron, large white egret, small white egret, little egret, cotton egret, and Legge's baza, Indian brown-billed roller, hawk eagle, serpent, and fish eagle. Mammals: bear, monkey or hill wanderoo, grey flying squirrel, small Ceylon flying squirrel, highland great squirrel. Reptiles: water lizard or karayagoya.'

We are on our way again and bands of large grey monkeys take flight on all fours, their tails erect in the air, from the side of the road as our car approaches. They clamber up on to the nearest tree, looking back over their shoulders at us as we pass, blinking their inquisitive eyes.

Spotted deer snuffed the air from within the cool shelter of the

wood, their spots hard to distinguish in the dappled light. Such cattle as we passed by the side of the road were tethered together to prevent them straying. Wooden bells hang from their necks clattering as they move, frightening away the leopards and the beautiful black Cingalese panther that has eyes like emeralds.

After lunch the landscape changes. We leave the low country and start climbing two, three, four thousand feet. We are now in the tea country. The hill-sides are cleared and planted with tea which grows something like a small laurel and is pruned back to the ground and never allowed to reach more than a foot or two in height. Here and there above the dark serried ranks of the tea, rise the slim trunks of the albazia, a tree related to the mountain ash. It is grown for its shade so that the tender shoots of the tea don't get burnt. The colouring is lovely—the black-green of the tea and the silver of the albazia with its pointed leaves; beyond on the opposite mountain are plantations; small fleecy white clouds ride the sky, while in the folds of distant hills shines a tea factory, oxidized corrugated iron, silvered in the sun, the silver of the tin-foil lining in a tea-caddy. It puts me in mind of Italian primitives with their charmingly arranged little landscapes.

We stopped at one of these tea factories and 'the assistant tea-maker' showed us round. As I said, they are the colour of tarnished silver, like the interior of a tea-caddy, they look also like palaces on a lacquer screen, like square pagodas. Some are four-storied, some five, their walls are all window, windows that swivel on a central hinge, their floors and their ceilings being of undressed wood, thin, as ephemeral in appearance as a card palace. You mount the rickety stairs and see from floor to ceiling stretchers of sacking, tats they are called, one above the other in tiers, or banks if you prefer their technical name. The sacking, the brown of the wooden frames, of the floors, and the ceilings call to mind the gills of a mushroom. The windows open out over views of mountains and valleys, tender green bathed in a nacreous mist. What we see are the districts that feed this factory: Upper Albion, Chilhampton, Hokgalla, and Abigail. It is from these misty mountain sides that come the sackfuls of green leaves. On arrival the leaves are spread out over the tats to dry. It is not yet that we get the intoxicating smell. This is downstairs where they do the rolling in large machines that bruise the leaves; it is then that one begins to smell the tea, but it isn't the tea smell that we

know, the delicious warm smell that greets one on lifting the lid of a teapot—this one gets in the drying-room. In the rollers the leaves are still moist, a bruised brown-green, and have a pungent aroma all of their own. It's when they emerge from their baking, the 'frying dhool', to be spread out on trays to be sifted that one gets the full impact. It's intoxicating, one takes deep breaths of it, filling one's lungs with the deliciousness of it. One would like to bury oneself in the nigger-brown leaves.

In the sifting-house women with deft fingers squat on the floor picking, sifting, winnowing; Broken Orange Pekoe, Orange Pekoe, Fly Pekoe, Fly Pekoe Fanning, Dust and Broken Mixed—these are the names, the magical invocations to be used in this silver pagoda on a hill.

Still we climb—six thousand feet. We find cedars now and blood-red rhododendrons and hedges of wild sunflowers, waterfalls and rushing springs. Still we have the tea. The higher it grows the healthier it is, the darker the leaves. We pass drifts of wild lilies, small single chalices growing close to the ground, each a delicate coral pink. We pass shrubs of datura smothered in flowers. A framework of bamboo and a flutter of white rags among the tea bushes announces the grave of a Tamil woman, one of those pretty little creatures that we see in brown woollen saris with garnet studs in their noses and gold cylinders in their ears; happy, laughing little creatures that pluck their life away up in these beautiful mountains. They would smile at us as we passed. Sometimes we would catch them sluicing their brown bodies in a stream or rinsing their long black hair under a waterfall.

It is evening, and we have dropped four thousand feet. We are in Kandy. Again I am seized with the magic of the place; the beating of the drums; the wonderful yellow of the priests' robes; the encircling hills and the flat-topped trees that grow like cedar. At the temple the head priest shows us Buddha's golden begging bowl, pure gold, as soft and as pliable as putty. We see all the regalia, the gold and silver dishes, the images and decorations studded with sapphires and rubies. We make our offerings at the shrine, pink frangipani flowers cupped in a plaited basket of leaves. The table before the Shrine of the Tooth is of chased silver hung with silver tassels; a load of sweet-scented blossoms covers it, jasmine, frangipani, and great heads of lotus. The walls of the shrine are lined with gold plaques and hung with silk.

Tomorrow is Wesak, the Lord Buddha's birthday, and the night is throbbing with drums, shrill with flutes and chanting. The storekeeper beneath my window has been up all night decorating his shop, facing it with bamboo and paper and coloured lights. I can't see the effect from here, so I lean out of the window and gaze over the lake, for I certainly can't sleep. At intervals I read, and from my book learn that near this lake was enacted one of the most gruesome scenes in history, involving Sri Wikrama, the last of Kandy's kings.

All night the drums went and all today, coming from different parts of the town, a hard insistent beat with no resonance; in the end one finds it aggravating. And now people are beginning to pour in to see the procession tonight; some Buddhist relic from the temple is to be paraded through the streets. Jostling the crowd are sellers of balloons, peanut vendors, and hawkers of betel. Lemonade as brightly and as vari-coloured as the glass bracelets worn by the peasant women, mauve, green, and pink—lovely colours but those instinctively one associates with all the more virulent forms of poison, are prominently displayed on temporary stalls erected by the side of the lake. As a background to all this are the shops decorated out of all recognition, completely transformed, their fronts hidden behind bamboo frames fronded with the tender shoots of the cocoa-nut palm, split to look like fringes of butter-yellow silk bordered with green. Little oil-filled paper buckets with candles in them, a kind of local Japanese lantern, are strung round all the houses.

In the morning we see some Kandian dancers who perform for us in the garden. They dance to the drums. Six dancers there are, dressed in the traditional Kandian costume, a double flounced skirt of white cotton—it appears as a skirt from the front but as trousers when seen from the back. Fins or *ruches* stick out and upward at the waist, forced out by a broad belt studded with silver from which drops a triangular kilt similarly studded, edged with tufts of coloured silk. Above their waists the dancers have breast-plates of beads spun like a spider's web, the strands converging in the middle of their bare chests. Their shoulders are capped with brass plates and they wear armlets. Their head-dress is high, a kind of tiara that slopes outward over the eyes, all of silver and hung with pendant sequins of the same metal. Strange ear-like appendages frame the sides of their faces, while long ribbons

fall from the top of their head-dress nearly to the ground. From the back they look like a stage-set glimpsed from behind the scenes; all wired and strung and tied up.

Their dances are similar to those performed by the Balinese; angular, disjointed movements of the limbs, gracefully contorted hands, one knee bent, the other foot lifted from the ground with thigh to knee parallel. They stamp and turn, their arms and hands eloquently expressing feeling.

The procession over, the populace are now giving vent to their feelings. Singers carouse in the streets; a car, overset with a tinsel pavilion bearing a portrait of the Buddha, is making slow progress down the street. Young boys, twenty of them, sit singing in niches in the pavilion. They have tinsel crowns on their heads and are heavily powdered and rouged. They chant a monotonous little ditty, no doubt of a religious nature.

We had been introduced to the secular manager of the temple, a kind of major-domo, I presume, and he had given us permission to witness the dressing of the elephants from the precincts of the temple, a great honour, I believe. The elephants stood below us down in a courtyard, their great grey backs just reaching above the platform on which we stood, within easy access for their robing. Above us again rose the steps leading to the interior of the temple, brilliantly lighted. Early comers had taken up their stations comfortably couched in the ample undulations of a surrounding wall. Past them pushed an eager, excited crowd on their way up the stairs to the inner sanctum, their offerings of flowers held high above their heads on plaited dishes of leaves. The light turned their faces an ash-blue giving a very weird effect. Everything blue looked mauve, the whites still whiter. Just out of sight, hidden from us by the entrance, stood a drummer who kept up a heavy, hard beating—so loud that one had to talk at the top of one's voice to be heard. All this in a comparatively small area, for the old part of the temple is very cramped for space.

The procession was late, for the chief elephant, the 'tusker', that was to carry the sacred relics, hadn't arrived yet. The crowd, for the moment, were allowed to remain on the forbidden ground, namely the platform on which we were standing. Three temple elephants had already made a sortie round the prescribed route, mounted by monks from the adjacent provinces in their yellow robes, with shaved heads and shaven eyebrows and one shoulder

bare. The central figure wore a towering *dāgāba* of gold on his head. Temple drummers, a flute player, and men bearing flambeaux affixed on hinges to long poles, a kind of brazier filled with flaming coals, cast flickering lights, that sent great shadows lumbering over the crowd, over walls and trees. The air was heavy with the smoke of incense and the sickly sweet smell of crushed flowers.

The elephants in the first procession we had just witnessed, having made their rounds, now crowded at the outer entrance to the temple on the far side of the moat in which lived the sacred turtles. And there they waited for the 'tusker' bearing the relic. Splendid as were their mauve velvet trappings, they were as nothing compared with those we were waiting to see donned. These were piled up on our platform, a dazzling array, including a four-foot howdah of chased gold lined with silver, gold sheaths studded at the end with large *cabochons* of pink quartz for the tusks, and yards and yards—enough to make a tent—of purple velvet heavily embroidered with silver. The attendants, six in all, were still in their working clothes, their ceremonial robes being tied up in bundles of white linen. The gold in the howdah, alone, must have been worth several thousands of pounds. There is no estimating the value of the regalia as a whole, and yet here it was for anyone to handle.

We waited about half an hour before the elephant made his appearance, and it took a further hour to dress him. Patiently he stood while they tightened his girth of chains, while they adjusted the velvet coverings over his head: it took them ages to arrange the openings for his eyes, it kept on slipping and blinding him completely. He was quite unconcerned, however, and munched away peacefully at the roots of a cocoa-nut palm, an enormous, greenish-yellow log of wood. He placed a foot on one end whilst with his trunk he pulled at the other; if it was too tough for him to chew he hoisted the log up into position, ramming his tusk down the middle to split it, an operation that sounded like the rending of an enormous tree, even his munching could be clearly heard above the thumping of the drum.

The howdah in place at last and the pale violet cushion on which the relic was to repose hung on silver chains from the dome, everything was in readiness. The crowds were brushed away, swept reluctantly from off the walls, and the attendants began their

own dressing, as temperamental as prima donnas about the winding of their *comboys* or petticoats, eight or nine yards of material into which they corseted themselves, winding round like tops spun by a colleague who held the ends, keeping it taut. They wore nothing above the *comboy*. A heavily embroidered circular red cloth hat with upturned brim completed their toilet, this and, of course, the knotting of their long hair into a tight chignon.

A certain air of expectation now reigned—the noise died down, all except the drums. Eagerly we waited, watching the face of the guardian at the door, hoping to get some indication from him on what was happening inside. The drum beats louder, then, suddenly, a terrific explosion rends the air, making us all jump, even the elephant, setting the bells of the howdah ajingle. A throaty noise of exaltation went up from the crowd. This meant that the relic had been lifted from its resting place and was at the moment in the hands of the head priest. It wouldn't be long now. The explosion, we found out afterwards, was from the firing of a cannon, an old seventeenth-century Dutch piece, an early model of the trench mortar. It would seem a miracle that it fired at all.

From now on I am not responsible for the absolute accuracy of all I saw. It was so incredible, so strange to my eyes, that I found it hard to believe that what I was witnessing was actually happening, that it was real, and not just a passage in a beautiful tale, an *Arabian Nights'* tale, though indeed there was nothing Arabian about it.

Some men appeared, temple servants bearing a thin strip of linen about a foot wide embroidered in triangular red and white zigzags, a kind of carpet or mat which they proceeded to lay down on the steps and across the platform to the waiting elephant. Preceding this came drummers dressed also in red and white, with them six men with circular cymbals—like tambourines without the drum part—in pure silver. These they held in their left hands, shaking them, rolling them with a strange, sensuous movement as if throwing a lasso, all chanting in unison to this bell music. One stationed himself touching me—there wasn't room to move. I noticed he had on silver anklets with attached toe rings and bangles on his arms. I can't remember the rest, I was unable to take it all in. Preceding this, I had forgotten to mention, were men with trays of flowers, frangipani blossoms with which they sprinkled the floor. There were also braziers of hot coal, burning incense: I don't really remember these but I know they were there. By this

time I could feel my heart pounding in my throat. Then appeared the head priest—and a further throaty exclamation of ‘Ahs’ from the people down in the street, for they could see him in the entrance before we did. He came down and turned the stairs, an old, old man bearing a golden dāgāba out in front of him, holding it up with his thin hands. In it rested the relic. Two younger priests, one with gold-rimmed glasses, stood, one at each elbow to assist him in case he tripped. Obviously the weight of the gold was a strain on him. The stairs negotiated, he walked swiftly across the short expanse of platform, casting on us a searching look.

It took several minutes for the temple servants to fix the relic securely on its cushion; this gave me time to look round. The platform was now aflame with burning coals and crowded with all the participants in the procession. Only one figure, though, stays clearly in my memory, and indeed he would be hard to forget. He was tall and dressed from head to foot in gold. During the short respite I managed to whisper—a whisper that in reality must have been a shout—a few questions to our guide and protector. I asked him the identity of this impressive figure. Back came the answer, shouted in my ear. He was the head trustee, an old Kandian noble, from one of the other temples. He was an old man—I should say about seventy-four—with his white hair knotted in Cingalese fashion. His costume must be described, for it was the same state regalia as worn by the high officials in Sri Wikrama’s reign—one that had been handed down from reign to reign of Kandy’s kings. I thought I could trace a European influence but apparently that is not so. We are assured that its inspiration is pure Cingalese. The hat is of solid gold brocade having five points instead of a brim, somewhat like a starfish, a sixth point forms the crown, all points being tufted with gold thread. The jacket, again of solid gold brocade, is short and worn open, with leg-of-mutton sleeves. The *comboy* is voluminous, also of gold brocade but threaded on a finer material, almost transparent. This is swathed round many times and worn, I should say, over padding affixed to the hips. The effect is that of an inverted brandy glass.

This august personage in our procession had a tall cane or walking-stick plaited in gold leaf, its knob encrusted with rubies. He held this most elegantly, a little below the head, moving it out to the side as he walked—very much the ‘grand seigneur’ that indeed he was.

At last, the relic being firmly attached to everybody's satisfaction, the high priest retired again into the temple and the procession began. Again a roar from the crowd as the golden dāgāba was seen to appear, swaying slowly from side to side across the bridge. Six elephants were now taking part in the procession, the dancers and players of cymbals forming a train behind the 'tusker' with the relic, a revolving train of white and red. Very slowly they twisted and turned in time to their music, in time to the solemn tread of the elephants. The crowd was not hesitant about showing their enthusiasm, but nothing perturbed the elephants—sedately they marched off ringed round with flaring flambeaux, indifferent, it seemed, to the whole procedure. The light from the flambeaux glowed like the reflection of a distant fire down the length of the procession. We watched it out of sight from the columned terraces of the palace which abutted on to the temple ground, the reflections dancing and leaping against the starry sky, throwing the cocoa-nut palms into feathery relief. The 'ahs' from the crowd were now but a distant echo; then turning a corner the whole magnificent display lumbered into sight again—'ah! ah! ah! eih!'

It was an extraordinary sight.



We leave this morning for the Rock Temples of Dambulla, the Fortress of Sigiriya and the buried cities of Polonnaruwa: relics of Ceylon's great past, of which I am shamefully ignorant, but which I hope to learn about as we go along.

The caves of Dambulla are excavated in a bare facing of rock rising some five hundred feet above the surrounding forest. We approach them by a precipitous path which passes over a narrow shelving of rock. We meet numerous pilgrims making their descent, having paid homage to the hundred and seventy-one Buddhas—they look remarkably cool, but then, for them, the worst is over. We struggle up panting and exhausted. Like Lourdes, like any shrine, one's impression is marred by all the mumbo jumbo and trappings of religion. The caves, five of them, are enormous: in each, sitting, standing, reclining, are to be found numerous representations of Buddha, impressive enough in themselves if it were not for their surroundings. In the big central cave the figures recede, becoming invisible as they dwindle to be

swallowed up in darkness. Cleared of the rubbish it's a scene that would command one's admiration. But alas, this is not to be. A priest greets one on entering, standing behind what looks like a dirty kitchen table. He points to a register. 'Please to sign!' This one does, making an appropriate donation at the same time, but not without first having scanned the list to ascertain the correct amount; it's all very sordid. A patchwork curtain of dirty silk is drawn across the principal shrine and there is a rancid smell of old oil. The rock ledges upon which the Buddhas sit are caked in old grease, candles that have burnt out. One treads on bruised flowers with one's stockinged feet.

In the second and largest cave there is a very fine reclining figure of Buddha, but again I find it hard to admire it. There are also one or two interesting figures of kings carved out of wood but I am unable to dissociate them from all the mess.

At the eastern end of the same cave, flanked by a double row of seated figures, is a square space, railed in and sunk below the level of the floor. In this is placed a silver chatty to receive the water which drips continually from a fissure in the rock—pure, crystal clear, and cold, the purest thing, perhaps, about these caves. But it is not to be tasted by us poor mortals and is reserved exclusively for religious purposes.

Our path down is lined with the usual beggars; the maimed, the halt, and the blind. At the bottom are rush stalls bright with sticky, luke-warm lemonades, glowing in the sun like glass jewels. They also sell lithographs of the Lord Buddha sitting on a cloud, looking very catholic, framed in mirror.

But Sigiriya—Sigiriya is quite another thing: it is only ten miles away and we reach it within half an hour. We are tired and hot after our climb to the Rock Caves but like magic our weariness vanishes. Sigiriya lies on enchanted ground, the haunt of blue jays and kingfishers, inhabited by ghosts and the lovely 'ladies of Sigiriya', probably the most beautiful Oriental frescoes in existence.

But we are anticipating; we have not reached them yet, for, like angels, they inhabit another sphere, two or three hundred feet up in the pellucid air, on tempera clouds gathered in a pocket of rock. For, as in Dambulla, we have to do with a rock, but of a very different kind. Sigiriya is a vast monolith, an enormous mass of granite, unattached, completely isolated in its sea of

green, a Rock Fortress, the retreat of a parricide. But we forgive Kā'syapa his crime, for he was a genius. Who but a genius could transform sheer rock, as high as the Pyramids, well-nigh unscalable, into a palace?—a palace with its attendant baths, its gardens, its throne room, and its galleries. So sheer were the sides that slots had to be hewn in the rock to support the masonry. Yet, in spite of this, a gallery, four and a half feet wide, paved in stone and sheltered by a high wall, wound its serpentine way up to the rock summit; a sheltered causeway up and down which the king was carried in his palanquin or carrying chair. Round the base of his fortress he had planned a city, encircling it with a double ring of walls. This, too, had its throne room and its baths, its stables for the royal elephants, its houses and its barracks. Inscriptions tell us that once a month he left his palace in the skies to attend a council in the city.

Here, was no pathetic fugitive cowering in the jungle, but a great mind that would dare anything, face anything except his conscience. He does not seem, though, to have been happy in his stolen honours. For eighteen years he ruled at Sigiriya.

Slowly we wandered through the parklands that had once been his outer city. The grass was green and tender, clipped like a lawn by grazing cattle. The trees were in bloom, a kind of acacia called 'golden rain', with bell-like blossoms, a fragile shower of the palest yellow. Squirrels scampered out of our path, for there was no one there to disturb them but ourselves. Climbing gently we came to the first of the audience halls, a great flat throne of the simplest lines carved out of the living rock, a gigantic boulder that had been cleft in two by the master builder. The other half had been left standing, the throne having been hewn out of the interior facing of the slab lying on its side. On the vertical rock Kā'syapa had carved a ceremonial pool, with below a room for his robing. The pool is beautiful in its proportions.

We mount still further. We are now at the third and last wall, the very innermost of the defences, and it is from here that we begin the climb of four hundred feet up to the palace. Guard houses flank the narrow steps. We also see the remains of the parapet wall that originally curled its way up, clinging to the face of the cliff the whole length of the climb. Some two hundred feet is all that is left of it now, but in this small portion the polish is so bright that it is called the 'mirror wall'. After a

millennium and a half you can still see yourself reflected in its ivory surface.

But before we begin the ascent we mount a spiral staircase enclosed in wire mesh, leading vertically upward to the rock-pocket forty feet above the gallery floor. Here are the 'Ladies of Sigiriya'. Court ladies are they or Kā'syapa's mistresses or, perhaps, queens and their ladies-in-waiting? Some would have it that they are divine beings, celestial dancers or angels. But I do not believe it: their charms are of the earth, small waists, soft thighs, round breasts, and languidly lidded eyes. They surely have no religious significance. They are definitely sensuous in their appeal, and are probably portraits of the ladies of Kā'syapa's court. The king, with his eye to beauty, had them painted there above the gallery where he could look up at them as he passed below. Coronets, tiaras, aigrettes, crown their heads; flowers and ribbons adorn their hair; and ears, neck, breasts, arms, and wrists are loaded with a plethora of the heaviest ornaments and jewelled gauds. The gold rings in their ears are so heavy that they have distended the lobes half way down their necks, but this gives them a certain elegance. It is not ugly.

The figures are not in the nude as one would at first suspect. Close examination would show that they wore garments of the finest gauze, more revealing even than Egyptian mist-linen. Their occupation is the cutting of flowers: lotus, water-lily, sunflower, and frangipani are in their hands or on trays. They smile, they bewitch, these lovely ladies of Sigiriya. I still see their cool, watery green eyes. They are cool because the elements have extinguished the fires in them.

It is to be hoped that they can be saved from impending doom. Each year a little plaster flakes off, detaching itself from the surface of the rock.

★ ★ ★

We spend the night at Polonnaruwa. We are doing these buried cities round the wrong way—Anuradhapura should come first, then Polonnaruwa, Anuradhapura being founded in 437 B.C., while Polonnaruwa did not come into its own until the eleventh century A.D.

These ruins, as all ruins, tell of invasion, of counter-invasion, of a renaissance, then of fresh wars, sacking and plunder, till finally

they sink into oblivion, to be discovered only by the archaeologist's spade—his axe in this case, since these royal cities were mercifully buried in jungle. I say mercifully, since growing things deal kindlier with man's works than does the soil. Invasion from southern India seems to have been the Cingalese sovereignty's great scourge. When not subject to Ceylon the Cholars were constantly invading its rich cities. From Anuradhapura the capital was moved to Polonnaruwa; from Polonnaruwa to Kandy in the mountains. Kandy, being well-nigh impregnable, we see as a seat of sovereignty for over four hundred years, Sri Wikrama being the last of Ceylon's long and noble line of kings.

The country we drive through can hardly be termed jungle, yet judging by the animals that inhabit it, that would be its correct appellation. It appears to be more forest than jungle, low growing, not particularly tropical in aspect, very green, its trees, at first sight, might be our European elm, sycamore or oak; their trunks are lichenous, their boughs innocent of creepers, and the grass at their feet is fit herbage for Guernsey cows to graze. God forbid, however, that anyone should tether so gentle a creature within its precincts. In a trice a leopard would be at its throat. What cattle we see are water buffalo, and these never far from a village, with wooden clappers round their necks to frighten away the wild beasts. Seldom are they unattended, men watch over them armed with rifles and torches. I notice all travellers on these roads carry torches, large chromium-plated affairs that one presumes must frighten the animals away. Quite frequently, I am told, lone wayfarers are reported missing, while it is a common occurrence to find the dwellers in these lonely villages with only one arm, a foot or a hand missing, or with great tears in their flesh. Every hamlet we passed through displayed a variety of skins; those of the harmless deer or the ferocious leopard, large beasts six feet long, their mute remains stretched over bamboo poles to dry, spotted by nature and not infrequently spotted by man with shot from his rifle.

At times the forest would smell like a zoo, the strong musky smell of wild beasts, stronger even than a lion house (but not more odiferous than our hotel in Calcutta)—this was bear. We didn't see any, nor did we see any elephant, or the wonderful black panther with its cold green eyes like amber lamps. But motoring by night I believe one is surrounded by a battery of luminous eyes.

Monkeys there were, though, by the thousand; big grey ones with black faces and white beards, that walked sedately on all fours across the road, their tails hooked in ludicrously arrogant fashion.

We stay in the Rest House at Polonnaruwa on the banks of a silver lake, or 'tank' as it is called here—reservoir would probably be the right word. It was on these so-called 'tanks' that Ceylon's ancient civilization was founded and that her livelihood depended; a system of irrigation that compared favourably with the Pharaonic canalization of the Nile valley, which indeed can hold its own even against the Aswāns and Boulder Dams of today. Confronted with these enormous sheets of water—the largest, in official figures, extending over three thousand acres, its capacity 10,269,184,032 gallons, the length of the dam or retaining bank over four miles, with a minimum depth of thirty feet—one can but wonder at the constructive genius of the Cingalese.

Whole valleys have thus been walled off, collecting the water from the neighbouring higher land.

If viewed from a high hill central Ceylon would have presented a series of lakes controlled by spillways and sluices, round about, as far as the eye could see, would have stretched the green of paddy fields. This is as it would have been under its ancient kings. Today it is jungle except where the government have instituted experimental stations; the beginning of a colonizing enterprise designed to bring back prosperity to this part of the island. They have repaired a few of the breaches and some of the tanks are in use again. 'So substantially banked are they,' declares one engineer in his report to the government, 'that with a little attention they may last forever.' They were constructed, it must be remembered, in the first century B.C.

Tortoises sun themselves on blocks of stone that line the banks, for the tank is now at its highest, the blocks being those hewn by the Cingalese of the old kingdom. They are still in place. There are crocodiles, I read, in these still waters, but we didn't see any. Driving along a high embankment we pass the sluices which control the outlet of the water, carried by canals to the neighbouring fields. By the sluices the water is always turbulent where it gushes through to the canal; here are to be seen bathers, for the Cingalese are a very clean people, the poorest farmer bathes himself every day. They are strangely modest about it; the men never

being seen without a breech-cloth, the women clad in a *comboy*, wrapped round them under their arms, covering their round breasts, rounded like the women at Sigiriya. But wet, the *comboy* is revealing like the draperies clinging to Greek statuary, wetted purposely by the sculptor, so that it should retain its folds and at the same time show the contours of the limbs. Stooping, with their backs to you, sluicing water over their shoulders these dusky maidens look indeed like statues, not Greek so much as Hindu, their lines are softer, the swell of the hips more abrupt, more exaggerated than we know them in the Venus de Milo, more like the friezes we see on the cornices of the buildings here at Polonnaruwa. For Polonnaruwa is not considered pure Cingalese but Hindu; she is the product of foreign architects, of forced Hindu labour. Here is the period of the renaissance in the island's history. Dominated so long by the Cholars, she now in turn dominates them, invading southern India and demanding as a tribute thousands upon thousands of shipments of slave labour. The statues, the bas-reliefs then, that we see, are pure Hindu, so also are the draped forms of the women we see bathing by the sluices. They are islanders but their forms are Hindu, the beautiful sensuous lines made familiar to us by the supple hands of India's artisans.

It has been said that Polonnaruwa was conceived in an age of ostentation and over-decoration and that it lacks dignity. But I was not conscious of any of its supposed shortcomings. Is it that ruins, being only fragments of the original and overgrown with moss and ferns, take on a poetic quality—becoming like a charming Piranesi engraving, assuming beauties that, in their pristine state, they never possessed. I don't think so. Look at the vulgarities of Imperial Rome.

I found Polonnaruwa very beautiful; particularly the twisted pillars of the flower altar and the lotus bath, each step a petal of the lotus; and growing round it what the Cingalese call drowsy or sleepy creeper, known to us as 'touch-me-not' or the sensitive plant. Approach its delicate, symmetrically opposed leaves and immediately they fold up. It's quite uncanny. There is the beautiful Vatadage or circular shrine, with its figures of Buddha seated facing the four cardinal points, the steps leading to each image approached over a semicircular slab or moonstone carved in relief with banded friezes of elephant, lion, and sacred geese.

Grotesques or dwarfs—the Indian equivalent of *putti*—chiselled in the round, hold up each step.

The flower altar is generally supposed to have been the shrine where the tooth relic was exposed to the public on feast days. The tooth relic is known to have been brought to Ceylon as early as A.D. 310, eight hundred and fifty years after Gautama Buddha's death, and has always been regarded as the most sacred of relics by rigid Buddhists. We see it at Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and now at Kandy.

Polonnaruwa is like a neglected park, with lush green grass growing round its tumbled shrines, a grass which although never cut has the aspect of a shaved lawn. We move from one quarter to another in this vast garden, accompanied by the brilliant flash of kingfishers' wings, that seemingly ephemeral commodity which, traded with China, Sir Osbert Sitwell tells us, produced the riches on which Cambodia's great capital was built, the Chinese using the wings in copious quantities for inlay in their jewellery.

We move northward and to the west, away from lovely Polonnaruwa, on our way to Anuradhapura—past forests and small villages and those bamboo or reed pavilions by the wayside with their fluttering flags, similar to those we have already met in the tea country. They are graves. I learn from Marshall that the poorer classes are always buried; they prefer to be cremated but it is too expensive. They can be buried for the incredible sum of five rupees, roughly seven shillings in our money, while cremation costs them over five pounds.

We lunch as usual when travelling, at a rest house: at Habarane this one happened to be, on the main road from Kandy to Trincomalee. These rest houses play an important part in one's life in Ceylon and, indeed, are responsible for much of its charm.

They are a government institution and were founded, for the most part, shortly after the British occupancy of the island, that is to say in the early part of the last century. Travelling was then carried out either by carriage or coach, so they are to be met with at fairly short intervals on all the main roads. No large town is without a rest house, clean, beautifully kept (they are visited every month by an itinerant inspector), serving excellent meals, each rest house keeper specializing in some dish or sauce peculiar to the district.

It is with surprise that one finds these airy, tiled bungalows to

be furnished with Hepplewhite and Sheraton, but, as we have noted previously, all things colonial are invariably somewhat demoded. In Ceylon I believe the native carpenters are still turning out Regency pieces.

How right they are to venerate the Bo tree, Marshall's *Ficus religiosa*. Its leaves are heart-shaped with a long tail like a tadpole, the tenderest green I have ever seen. A Bo tree in new leaf looks like a green flame in the landscape—or a pool of translucent water. Their trunks are mottled like the Provençal plane—the whole effect, in fact, is that of light. In the evening you will find the natives burning joss-sticks. They offer up a prayer and then leave behind them a cocoa-nut oil lamp to burn through the night to mark their visit. Even in the dark then, these trees are light. Dozens of small lamps burn like fireflies round the base of each tree, resting on improvised altars built out of bricks.

It was under the Bo that Gautama Buddha attained his Buddhahood, his *Nirvana*, and this is why it is venerated.

We motor for miles in and out of the town through the forest in search of Anuradhapura's remains—pools and baths, *dāgābas*, temples, council chambers, monasteries, and those charming houses of meditation expressly built for the higher order of priests to contemplate the mysteries in, luxurious palaces set apart from the crowd in forests of green.

The waters of these baths are now bright green, opaque, and barely cover the bottom, deep only where the foundations have given in, tilting the stone. In these concavities swarm the water tortoise, their black, snake-like heads sticking inquiringly out of the green. Little grey monkeys scamper around the borders waiting for us to throw them something to eat. We produce some bananas which they catch in mid air. In a flash they have whipped off the skin, blinking furiously with greed, and stuffed the soft fruit down their gullets, an operation that takes but a moment, for they see we have more in our bags.

One bath we find dedicated to the priests. This is hardly surprising for, as we have seen, Anuradhapura is a sacred city—sacred to the priests. In their orange and yellow robes they moved unrestricted, like royalty itself, down the many streets, free to come and go as they pleased. This pool is set with a seat for meditation, a niche carved with a rocky couch from where the priest could direct his eyes on to a small pool directly in front of him. As

a seer he would gaze into its crystal depths. Then having contemplated the great teachings, having meditated, he could then descend a steep flight of steps to a larger pool, where, doffing his robes, he would bathe, the cool water slackening the tension in his brain.

We see the remains of the Brazen Palace but none could guess at its former splendour. All we see now is a forest of granite pillars, sixteen hundred placed in forty parallel lines, forming a square, a maze of Stonehenges, only much smaller, the largest of the columns being but twelve feet in height and two feet wide. These were encased in brick walls acting as props for the foundation.

No description of these ruined cities, however cursory, would be complete without a mention of the *dāgābas*. This applies to both Polonnaruwa and Anuradhapura, especially Anuradhapura: here they are all round us. I feel, however, that they need some explaining. As Sirr tells us 'it is a curious and interesting fact, that in all countries, where Buddhist doctrines are followed, these monumental buildings, which have been erected to contain relics of Buddha, are invariably of the same form—namely, a bell-shaped tomb, which is surmounted by a spire'.

But they are not tombs; they are reliquaries, each a solid mass of masonry, bell-shaped, surmounted by a tower built over a hollow stone or cell in which the relic is housed. Four hundred feet was the highest, Runvanvāli-sāya Dāgāba, which had a pinnacle of glass affixed to its summit, to serve as a protector against lightning. The Runvanvāli-sāya Dāgāba has been restored and still has its glass lightning conductor, only it is crystal and not glass, a gift from the Buddhists of Burma. They say that there is also an enormous ruby up there, embedded in the uppermost prong but that it has been shattered by a fork of lightning.

* * *

Cocoa-nuts and elephants! It is impossible to spend a day in Ceylon without mention of them; they crop up at every turn. When I think about it they have a certain affinity of shape; they are both domed and both coated with coarse hair.

Cocoa-nuts play an important part in everybody's diet and constitute one of Ceylon's major industries. The elephant, though somewhat outmoded as a means of transport, is still much in evidence, its great bulk often met with lumbering down the side

of the road, and, as we have seen, no religious festival is complete without them. They are with the natives a question of prestige.

* * *

My four windows, in a row along one wall, are wide open, open on to the pounding of the Indian Ocean. I am on a ship at sea, but miraculously still, a steadiness of keel that belies the pounding of the surf. A wind blows, for the monsoons are starting. The sun has just set and the waters are yellow; the sky gold—so much on the island is gold. A cocoa-nut palm, bent by the wind, dips, curving outwards over the sea, its plumed head is now black against the greying, fast darkening waves. Night falls in an instant here in the East—black and nacreous: and I am forced to turn on the light. It's with a heavy heart that I write. Our trip is over, in twenty-four hours we leave—leave this magic isle, these smiling, small-boned people who are always so anxious to please. They treat you as one of themselves, and this I find a great compliment.

Ceylon—the thought of leaving hurts, like leaving a woman with whom you are in love, a heavy gnawing misery that will not be quieted.

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